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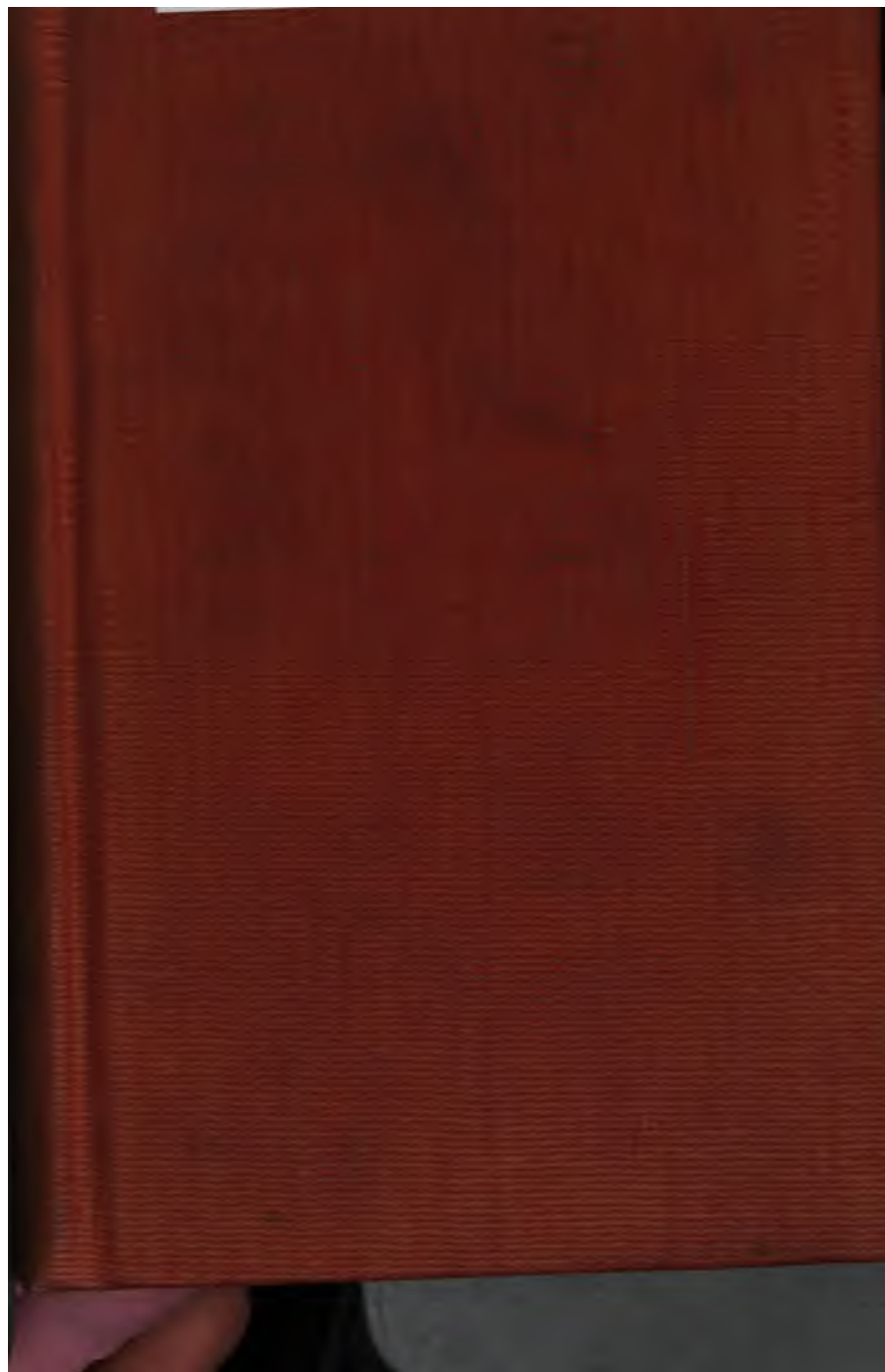
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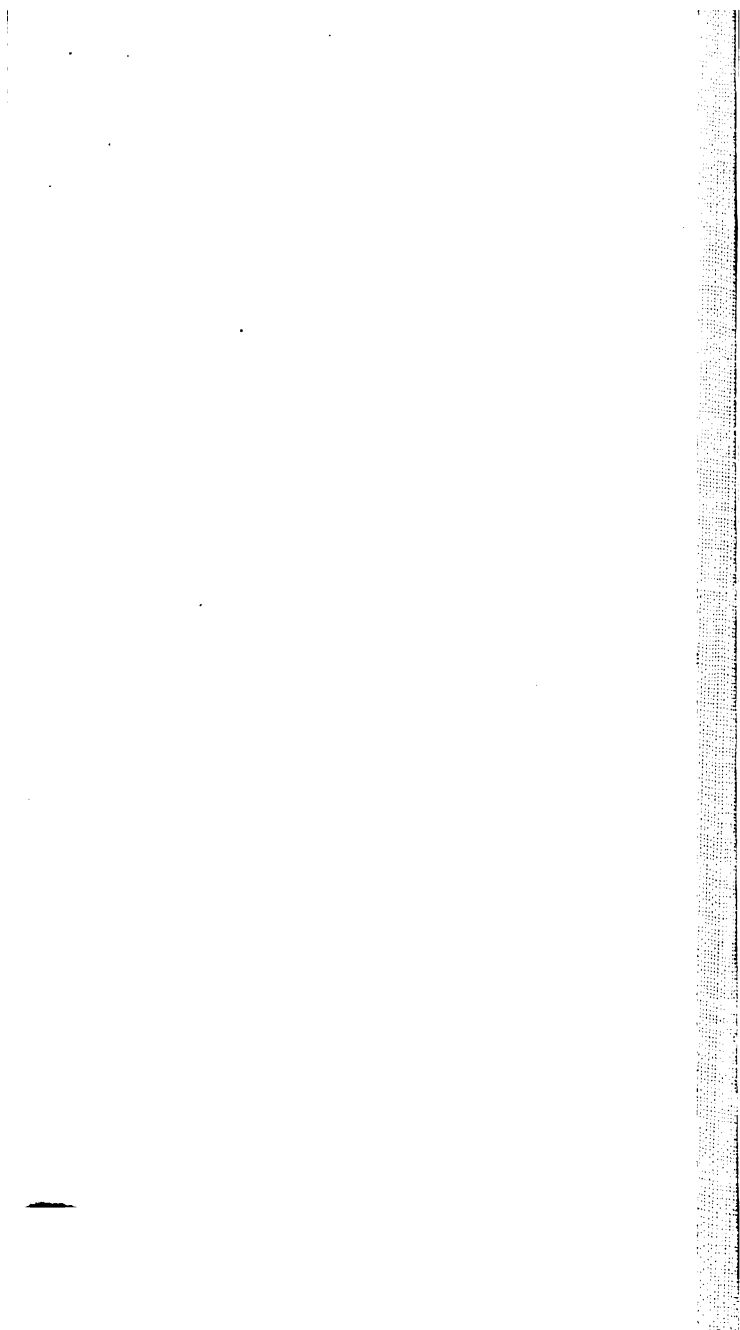
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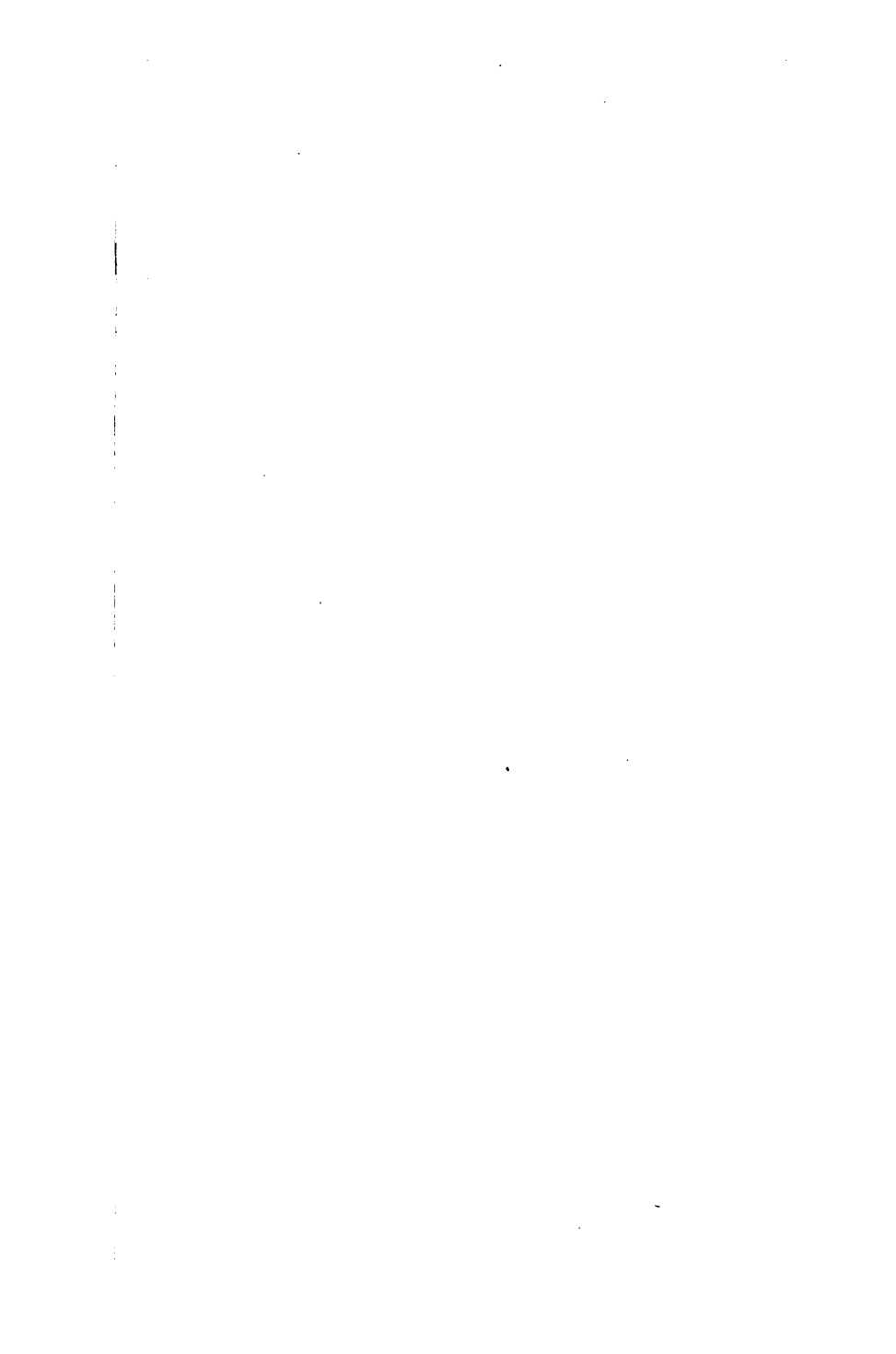


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**HIGH-WAYS AND BY-WAYS;**  
**OR,**  
**TALES OF THE ROADSIDE,**  
**PICKED UP IN THE FRENCH PROVINCES.**

**BY**  
**A WALKING GENTLEMAN.**  
*i.e. Thomas Colley Grattan*  
**THIRD SERIES.**

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**"I love France so well that I will not part with a village of it ;  
I will have it all mine."** *King Henry V.*

**IN TWO VOLUMES.**

**VOL. I.**

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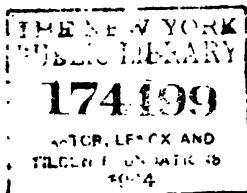
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*A. F.*



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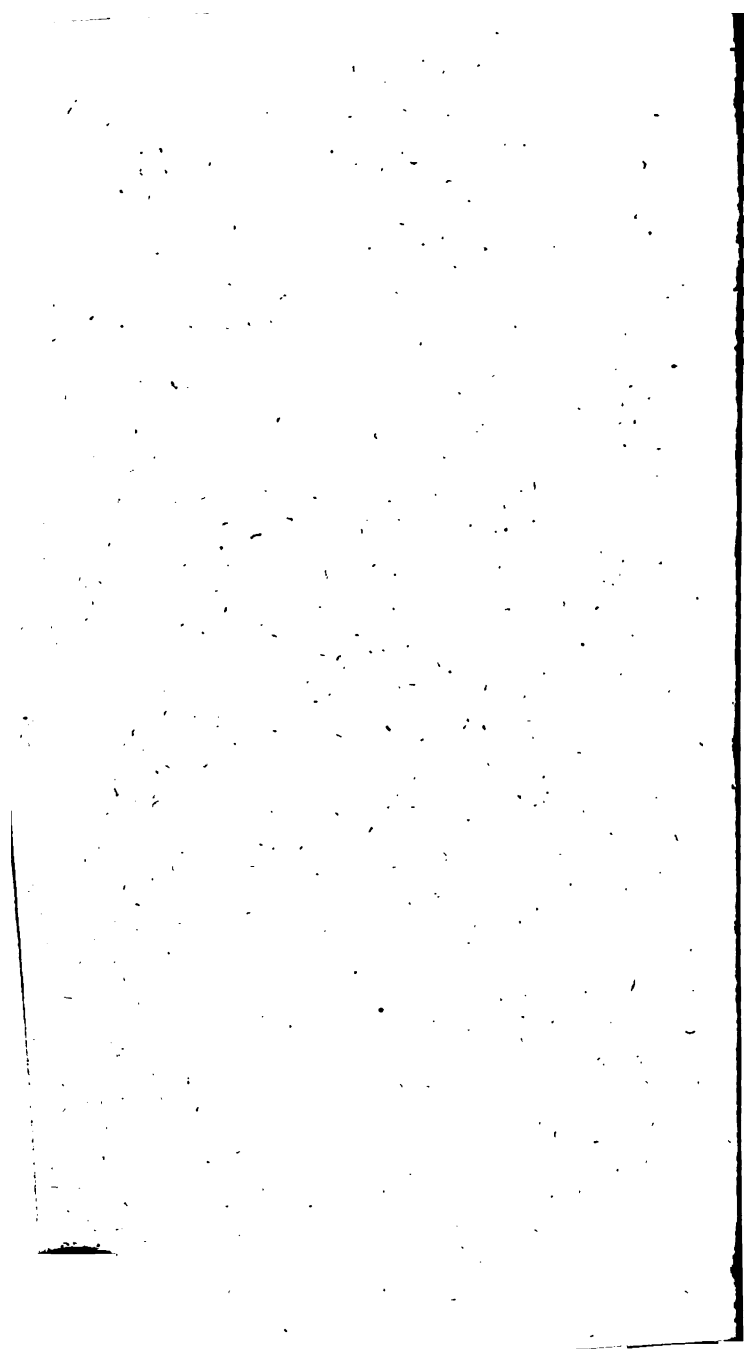
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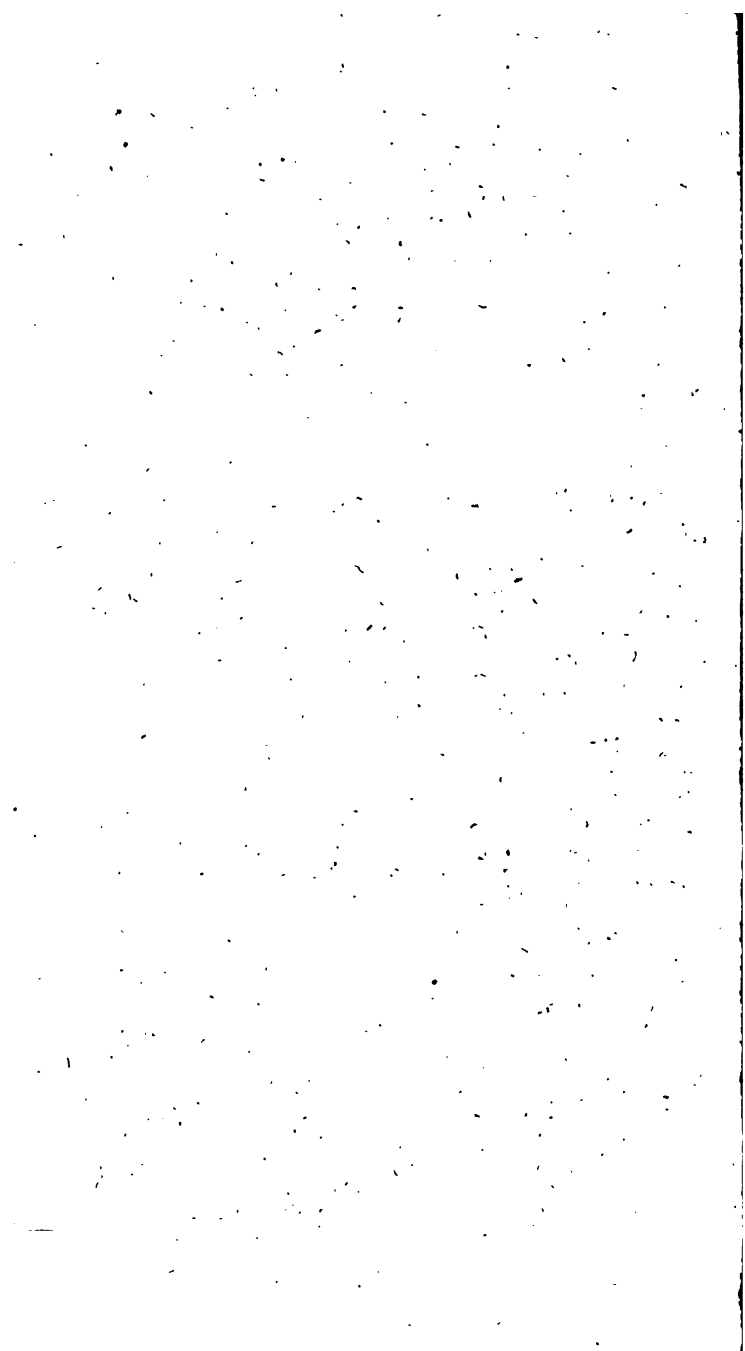
## THE CAGOT'S HUT.

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Affairs that walk,  
As they say spirits do, at midnight, have  
In them a wilder nature than the business  
That seeks despatch by day.

SHAKESPEARE.





## THE CAGOT'S HUT.

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### CHAPTER I.

I MUST once more, and probably for the last time, transport my readers to the mountainous district which joins France to Spain, and lead them into scenes and adventures which I traverse again in memory. My recollections of those regions, as vivid as they are various, may enable me to trace with some effect the country and the people; but the associations of feeling connected with the story I am about to relate, press on me in painful and embarrassing confusion.

In the former recitals of my Pyrenean walks, I have happily had to sketch but scenes of nature, and acts of men, which, though imperfect in the mass, or individually objectionable, had nothing so revolting as the source of the events I would now record. For *they* had their existence in that of the *cordon sanitaire*, a memorable establishment, formed for the perpetration of a political crime, which led to thousands of instances of suffering, deeper than the insulated one which I, by chance, was witness to.

It was late in the autumn of the year 1822 that I found myself, a second time, and for a short period, in the neighbourhood of those scenes which I had visited above three years before, in a milder season and happier times. War and winter were now approaching, hand in hand, and sending out the herald

omens of their coming. An army of nearly thirty thousand men, stretching for a hundred leagues from sea to sea, had possessed themselves of the whole range of mountains; and their glittering arms and floating standards scared the wild deer and the eagles, in their most remote and inaccessible haunts. The snow had invaded the hills, and with silent encroachments it came daily downwards, driving the stunted herds and flocks from their chilled pastures, and covering, like a funeral shroud, the dying beauties of the woods. The shepherds took possession of the plains, but not with the wonted cheerfulness and ease which had, in other years, accompanied their autumnal migration. They had not now the quiet homes of better days, nor could they look forward even to the scanty but undisturbed enjoyments of the winter hearth. Their huts were filled with soldiers; each village was a military post; and, besides all the tumult and alarm excited by this change, the whole country swarmed with a desperate rabble, driven out of Spain before the meteor flash of liberty, which gleamed, like the Archangel's fiery sword, on that unhappy land, by nature intended for a paradise.

The fugitive bands of smugglers, monks, and mendicants, and worse even than either, were self-designated "The Army of the Faith;" covering by a bold impiety, the cruelty, bigotry, and cowardice which formed the elements of their compact. A few inflamed fanatics gave an ardent colouring to the rest, and deceived the distant observer by a hue less odious than the reality; but those who saw them closely, have, one and all, agreed in painting them as both vile in motives, and brutal in actions. At the time I describe, they were utterly expelled the Spanish soil; and they overran the neutral territory of France, in noxious and despicable crowds. The groups of these wretches, hovering on the frontier, had a picturesque atrocity of mien which was in keeping with the savage scenery. Lazy monks, wrapped in their thread-

bare cloaks and cowls, of brown, or grey, or black—half-starved women, with squalling infants, trudging along, shivering and almost naked—the mockery of an encampment of some scores of ragged ruffians, whose military accoutrements alone took from them the air of a gipsy bivouac. Such were the objects profusely spread upon the snow-covered mountains, and braving the blasts by which I myself was assailed, on my track from the Circus of Gavarnie, where I had been sating my curiosity by a view of the chief wonder of the Pyrenees.

The French army of observation, as the *cordon sanitaire* was newly named, occupied all the passes of the hills, and suffered considerably in their inclement positions. Every hut afforded miserable quarters to some ten or twelve soldiers, and in some places the troops were forced to encamp under tents, which were perpetually blown down, or torn up by storm gusts from the earth. I had many opportunities of observing the gaiety and good humour with which the soldiers bore privations of all kinds. No longer insulted by the ignoble pretence of forming a barrier against the yellow fever, they had thrown off the degrading title which it had procured them; and the whole appearance of things growing daily more warlike, with occasional skirmishes between the Constitutional Spaniards and the insurgent rabble of the Faith, gave a martial character to the scene, that warmed the imagination, and hushed the murmurs of the unfledged conscripts, of whom the army was composed. They were too unreflecting to discover that there was less dishonour in being the means of prevention to a physical contagion, than in becoming the instruments for the overthrow of the first of moral rights. But soldiers must obey, not reason; and a principle of duty, which applies exclusively to them, absolves from them the odium which falls with tenfold force upon the authority whose dictates they follow.

As no obstruction was at that time given to travellers within the frontiers, I pursued my excursions freely; and though shocked at every step to see the country I traversed forced from the solemn quiet of its natural aspect, I did not neglect the fund for observation afforded by the exotic and auxiliary illustrations which every step presented.

I had visited Gavarnie at that late season, to witness the effect given, by the accumulation of snow, to the cascades which foam over the stupendous rocks that form its gigantic amphitheatre. As this prodigious scene has been over and over described, I shall not make a transcript of the works of others, nor seek a rivalry with them; wishing rather to lead my readers into sites more unfrequented and obscure. I quitted Gavarnie, oppressed, I might almost say, by the contemplation of its vast sublimity and appalling desolation. I looked back on its glaciers, its cataclysms, and the mighty mounds that tower above them: I suffered imagination to rest awhile on the peaks where Ariosto's splendid genius had bounded uncontrolled—and I turned into the track of commonplace events and scenes, lightened of a weight of wonderment that seemed to bow me down.

I threaded the defiles that lead from Gavarnie to Gedro; hastened through the mass of created ruin called Peyrada, or Chaos, where measureless heaps of granite and calcareous rock have been hurled and strewed around by the Omnipotent hand; and I passed with sure, but rapid steps, the edge of precipices, from an attempt to fathom the depths of which the gaze involuntarily withdraws, baffled and dizzy.

When I entered the rustic inn of Gedro, late in the evening, I found but little comfort in the aspect of the place. It, like all other houses which professed to afford refreshment and repose, was completely filled by a motley crowd, composed of French soldiers and Gens d'armes, and all the varieties of Spanish vagabonds which I have before mentioned. Outside the

house, and nearly blocking up the approach, stood a throng of mules laden with all sorts of rubbish, saved from the ruin of their wretched owners, or pilfered in their flight; and with these were mixed, oxen, sheep, and goats, bellowing and bleating in all the discord of a cattle fair. Within was a scene of brute confusion quite analogous. A large fire, formed of the young bark of the cork-tree and a newly-felled pine, filled the wide chimney at one end of the room. Close to the flame pressed a throng of women, children, monks, and muleteers, their steaming cloaks joining a thick vapour to the smoke from the moist fire-wood and numerous cigars and tobacco-pipes. Several were standing; others sat on stools, and large blocks of stone, or wood: all employed in efforts to warm themselves, or hang on the branches which were crackling but not yet in flames, their gaiters, shoes, and sandals. The woman of the house occupied one corner of the chimney, stooping almost into the fire, while she cooked, on a gridiron of the rudest construction, slices of beef, cut by her husband from the still warm, and almost quivering carcase of a cow, that hung in one corner of the room. Some hungry individuals devoured the steaks, as they came tough and blackened, from the hands of the hostess. Others partook of the black bread and onions, which they carried in their wallets; and drank deeply of the wine contained in their goat-skin bottles, or quaffed, from small vessels of horn, the brandy which was served to them by the brood of urchin inn-keepers, which formed the remainder of the family. The Spaniards, who were strictly under the surveillance of the police, paid for whatever they consumed; and the Gens-d'armes threw many a look of contempt on the military and religious outcasts, as they drew forth their leathern purses and counted down the money, probably obtained by no creditable means.

Among the many wild and bandit-looking figures, one particularly struck me. There was an indolent

fierceness, a recklessness of results, a hardened indifference, all speaking together in his marked countenance and careless attitude, as he reclined against a block of wood, and prepared for the disposal of a smoking collop, which one of the boys was conveying from his mother's hands. This man, like all the other members of the Army of the Faith, was unarmed; that is to say, he bore no weapon of legitimate warfare—musket, sword, or pistol; all these being taken from their persons, as soon as they passed the Spanish lines and sought refuge behind the French army. Throwing open his cloak, which was wrapped in several folds round his body, I saw his broad leathern belt, on the unfilled cavities of which he seemed to throw a speaking look of regret for the arms that should be there. He, however, drew from his side pocket a knife, and opened a blade of poignard shape and length, with which he commenced to cut his meat, and the piece of coarse brown bread that was placed before him. While he fed, grossly and greedily, he might have been thought to have had all his ideas centred in the indulgence of his appetite; but I distinguished a sinister glance at times, which seemed to search for the observation of which he appeared so careless. His viands all despatched, he drew from the pocket of his loose breeches a flask, containing some liquor, most probably brandy. He slowly uncorked it, leant back his head, opened his mouth wide, and holding his hand high and steadily, he poured with great precision the continuous stream of liquid, not spilling a single drop, and thus swallowing the whole without once closing his lips, or letting them touch the bottle, a method of drinking very common to the Spanish peasants. He then handed the empty vessel to the boy, to have it replenished by his father's hand, and unrolling the scarlet cotton sash, which girded his body, he drew a ring from off its innermost end, and took some small pieces of coin from this secure substitute for a purse.

Under the inspection of a corporal of Gendarmerie, who acted as a commissary on the occasion, he paid his reckoning, and deliberately arranging his sash, wiping his knife blade, and replacing it in his pocket, he lighted his cigar, placed it in his mouth, and then wrapped the folds of his dark brown mantle round him, and stretched himself on the floor, where he soon slept, or pretended to sleep.

It was next my turn to receive some portion of the homely fare, which was furnished to me and Ranger in very scanty rations, and served up as uncouthly as possible. Every thing was, however, made more palatable to me by the civilities of the corporal, and more particularly by the attention of a sergeant of infantry, a spruce, dapper, consequential, and kind-hearted fellow, who, soon discovering my nation, exerted all his influence to procure me good treatment from the people of the house; and, in order to protect me from the contrary at the hand of the Spaniards, addressed me as if he thought me a true believing Frenchman, instead of an English heretic. England being held in unlimited hatred by those with whom I was forced just then to herd, the strictest precautions were requisite on my part to preserve the character thus assigned me.

While I made the best of my bad supper, and Ranger devoured his share, growling all the while at two or three half-starved curs, that made envious but vain efforts to snatch away the precious bones he was cranching, the sergeant entertained me by a fluent string of observations on the surrounding groups, and anecdotes touching the service in which he was engaged. He was a fair specimen of a French soldier, vain, mercurial, good natured, as was discoverable at sight—generous, humane, and brave, as the sequel of our acquaintance fully proved. He had served in Spain during the late war, and he piqued himself highly on his knowledge of the people, and also of the language, which he assured me he spoke “quite



like a Spaniard—the same thing.” But that little flourish he took a very early opportunity of disproving, by a sentence, execrable in idiom, accent, and pronunciation, addressed to one of the women who sat near us. It took effect, however, just as well as if it had been pure Castilian—for it was a compliment; and the woman rolled out a reply at the little sergeant from her voluble black eyes.

“Divinities, these Spanish women!” exclaimed he, slapping one hand against his own thigh, and the other on my shoulder, “Ar’n’t they, my friend?” And before I, his friend, could answer, he ran on—“Ay, that they are, dear creatures! Gods! how I have adored them—risked life and fame for them thousands of times—fought for them, robbed for them, broke parol for them—every thing, in short, but ran away for them; that I *could* not do, for I am a true Frenchman; but *sacre! peste!* I would have done even that—if I *could*. Look at that black-eyed Venus there—never was an eyebrow or the tip of a nose so like my Franchetta’s, the little nun I carried off from the convent in Salamanca.—And may I die, if that rough-muzzled fellow, who lies there with the cigar asleep in his mouth, isn’t the very model of her brother, whom I killed as he strove to stop our flight.”

Had I encouraged him, he would no doubt have found in every individual present a resemblance to some one who figured in his thousand feats; but wishing to discourage his personalities, I strove to turn his attention to a topic that might lead not abruptly from the one he handled.

“What do I think of the Spanish troops?” said he, repeating my question, “why, that they are not worth a thought. The weakest battalion of ours would beat their best brigade, if one can say *best* grammatically, where all are bad: but never mind niceties—what one learns in a college one loses in a camp.—But, as I was saying, they *do* fight like twenty devils, behind a wall, or a chevaux-de-frise—Saragossa for that.

They say death is on the point of a Guerilla knife, and hell at its hilt—because, from hell there's no redemption. Heaven preserve us from their treacherous blades!"

"What," said I, "such a one as our lazy comrade there carved his supper with, just now?"

"Ay, that and the like of it, they are as sharp as wit, and as cunning as a serpent—they slip down from a sleeve and into one's flank, without so much as a flash in the pan to give notice: and that very fellow, you may take my word for it, could rip a man open as dexterously as our host there slices that cow."

Just then, my eye fell on the swarthy face of the Spaniard, and I thought I could discover *his*, slowly and slyly half opened, and turned for an instant on the sergeant. The latter proceeded:

"Ay, take *my* word—you may safely—on whatever concerns Spain. I know them well, or *who* could? I have fought, drank, gamed, with the men, and, ah, God help you! what have I *not* done with the women! I suffered much in that damnable, delicious land—but, ye gods, what have I enjoyed? Do you know, my friend," continued he, "that of all my unfortunate days, since I first passed through Perpignan, that on which I was taken prisoner at Barossa was the worst?"

"No doubt," replied I, "liberty is the greatest of losses."

"Liberty! not a bit of it—I didn't care a fig for liberty—a dungeon is a heaven to a man of sentiment; if he has with him but one memorial of love."

"Then you lost all your baggage?"

"Baggage! ay, that I did—clothes, money, watch, all—but what of that? A man of mind enough to be a philosopher can be naked without a want; but the journal of my amours! Devil take me if the loss of it does not drive me almost mad, even now."

"The *what*?" asked I.

"The journal of my amours—the record of my intrigues—the list of my conquests—the names of my mistresses! that was the treasure, the dearest, the most precious to a man of honour: and I lost *that*—Oh, heavens! that which compromised the reputations of the loveliest women, and the noblest houses of Estramadura and Castile!"

The sergeant here quaffed, in solemn silence, a goblet of sour wine, to the memory of his mistresses and their buried reputations, no doubt. I found the subject so pathetico-ludicrous, that I could neither laugh nor cry, but, with, I fear, a half and half expression of sympathy and amusement in my countenance, I entreated the sergeant to be consoled.

"Yes, I will," exclaimed he, "*sacre bleu!* what's the use of sighing? The world's young yet, and why be sad on the very threshold of life!"

I liked the sentiment: and reasoning on the corporal's scale, I was pleased to flatter myself, that were he only on the threshold, I had not reached the portal. For the sergeant was certainly full forty years of age; and bore many of those invidious marks on his temples and cheeks, which may be called the mortal *termini* that denote the distances on the downhill path of life.

The different groups, of either sex and every age, were now huddled together, without respect to place or persons. Each took care of himself or herself respectively. Neither the women nor the ecclesiastics had any precedence given them as to choice, nor did the children meet any tenderness of regard; but each took possession of a sheep skin, a blanket, or whatever else was convertible to the purposes of covering or repose.

"Every one for himself, is the motto here to-night, you see," said the sergeant, "and you must not swim against the stream. As for me and my party, and my honest friends the Gends-darmes here, we have our quarters hard by, in a very well arranged, barrack-sort

of barn. I cannot take you there with me, and I don't like to leave you in this company, within reach of these pot-bellied monks, and long-knived Guerillas. I must endeavour to get you a bed—bad enough I fear—above stairs. Wait a bit.” And so saying, he rose, and went to settle the point with the host and hostess.

During the few minutes occupied in the negotiation, I had time to cast a glance on the thirty or forty human beings scattered around. Almost all had yielded to fatigue, and slept soundly, as testified by a full chorus of snoring, in every possible key; varied as I, perhaps maliciously, fancied, by the thick drawn sighs of the monks, as they lay stretched in close contact with the females of the party. The broad glare from the chimney, and the dingy gleams of a couple of coarse lamps showed the whole scene in a light that was in perfect keeping with the objects it brought to view.

In consequence of my being so warmly patronized by the sergeant, I was treated with great civility by the host and his wife, who immediately complied with the demand for a bed above stairs—in the same room they occupied. And having wished a cordial good night to my military friend and his companions, who now retired to their quarters, I gladly mounted the narrow stairs, that led me at all events one degree higher than the society I had been too long mixed with.

A tottering screen formed a division, for decency's sake, between me and my hosts; and I threw myself upon the bed, glad to stretch my limbs, though with little hope of sleeping, on a palliasse from which more than half its original stock of straw had been taken to supply forage for the horses belonging to the Gens-d'armes.

## CHAPTER II.

AFTER a couple of hours' persevering efforts, I gave up all hope of sleeping; and as the next most rational way of passing the night, I betook myself to reflections—of all sorts, poetical, moral, and so forth, but to no purpose. My thoughts ran restive and unmanageable, and rioted in utter confusion. They were as if blown about by the wind that roared around the house, rushing from the mountains, in gusts that seemed emulous of the voices of the wolves that kept tune with them. The rain poured down in torrents—the doors and window frames rattled—the house shook to its foundations—the animals in the yard lowed and neighed—their bells jingled—and the nasal signals of the sleepers in the room below came up through the liberal chinks of the uncealed floor, to complete the discordant chorus.

In this tumult of sounds, I strove to amuse myself by a comparative classification of all their varieties. I listened attentively to distinguish and separate the tremulous whine of the children, from the heavy breath of the women, the hoarse snore of their fierce mates, and the corpulent grunt of the fattest of the monks. I even thought that I now and then caught a murmured exclamation, warmer than my prayer; and ears did not deceive me in bearing me the echo of some of my friend the sergeant's, high-flown compliments, winging their way in soft whispers to the very heart of the dark-eyed Arragonese—for the cunning sergeant confessed as much to me afterwards, and also that one great cause of his kindness in placing me in the garret, was to get rid of an obstruction from the kitchen. Thus goes the world!—and *thus* passed the night.

My host and hostess were stirring long before the lark, and even ere the eagle shook the night showers from his wing, and sent his sharp gaze down the valley in search of prey. I arose with the dawn; and the restless company below stairs were employed betimes, in prayers, and imprecations, and demand for food. The nauseous bustle of the preceding night was evidently about to be re-acted; and I became impatient to make my escape from the scene. Looking from the window, I saw that the morning promised naught but dreariness. The valley, so lovely in summer, was now almost wholly flooded; and the Gave, which had its source in the cascade of Gavarnie, rolled foamingly along its swollen bed, and threatened to tear away the little bridge which was just opposite the inn. The only signs of animal life were a troop of Izards, which had been driven down from the hills by the storm, and were wildly gazing across the valley—and the figure of an old woman of miserable mien and corresponding attire, standing in the road in front of the house. Her stature was low, her complexion cadaverous, her eye sunken, and her countenance bore in every trait the imprint of disease and want. Her feet and legs were bare; a short petticoat just covered her knees; and over her head and coming half way down her back, was a blanket, or piece of coarse and filthy cloth. This she held folded round her waist, but as it lay open on her throat it exposed the hideous olive-coloured swelling called a *goître*, which protruded all around, and joined the lower jaw and chin, giving to the whole face an air of shapeless deformity. I knew enough of the Pyrenees and their population to be certain that I gazed upon a *Cagot*.

Aware of the abhorrence entertained towards this unfortunate race by the natives of the country, I rather hurried the preparations for my descent, for I thought it not improbable that some aid might be necessary for this poor object—one of the fittest for pro-

tection, or charity, because a prey to the prejudicial bigotry of mankind.

When I got down stairs, the whole assemblage was in motion, but none of them looking much improved by their night's discomforts. The host and hostess, with their children, male and female, were busy in attending to the calls of their rude company. Three or four Gens-d'armes and soldiers were lounging in their grey great coats about the door; and in front of it, as if immoveable, stood the melancholy piece of human statuary which I had witnessed from my window. I should have thought, from her appearance and attitude, that she was expecting alms, which she had not the courage to demand, had I not to my great surprise observed a piece of silver in her hand, which she held a little in advance of her body and towards the house.

The first of the party within who seemed to notice her, was a little girl of about ten years old, one of the children of the Spanish refugees; and no sooner did her eye fix itself on the appalling figure, than she uttered a scream, and shrunk back beside her mother, a swarthy Biscayan dame, who came forward to examine into the cause of her daughter's alarm. She, in her turn, on perceiving the old woman, shrieked and shrunk back; but snatching her child forwards again, she made her look steadily on the object of terror, while she assisted her in thrusting the thumb of her right hand between her middle and fore-fingers, thus putting forth the counter-charm against the evil eye, which is the summary substitute for the bracelet sometimes worn, called *manesita*, a little hand of ivory or stone, considered the legitimate amulet against witchcraft for human beings, as the paw of a mole is for mules and horses.

The cause of alarm now spread among the Spaniards, and they hurried towards the door to see the detested dealer in magic. Exclamations of horror, invocations of saints, and threats of punishment were

loudly uttered on all sides; and I began to apprehend some violence to the poor old wretch. But two persons, of more authority than I had any claim to, stepped forward to her protection, at the same time with me. The first of these was my friendly sergeant, who came from the barn, his foraging cap placed sprucely on one side of his head, and his great coat hanging loosely with a rakish air. As he advanced, he took off his cap and made a low bow of formal civility to the Arragonese woman—giving me a knowing wink at the same time, as much as to say he might have been more familiar if he chose it. While I stepped out into the road and stood near the poor Cagot, he commenced a harangue to the muttering Spaniards, foremost among whom was the ruffian who had chiefly attracted my notice the night before.

“Come, come, my good friends of the Faith, be pacified,” cried the sergeant. “Neither religion, courage, nor gallantry permits this. This poor object is a Christian and a woman to boot, do you know that?”

“A Christian!” gloomed the Spaniard, “she is a witch.”

“Not at all, my friend; you deceive yourself: witchery in France is practised by females much younger than she—and in Spain too, if I may be permitted so to say,” pulling off his cap again and making a general bow to the ladies who surrounded him, and every one of whom under fifty honoured him with a smile.

“Let her begone, then,” said the Spaniard, pale with rage or fear—“let her turn her cursed glance from the children of the Faith—*or!*”—and with this emphatic monosyllable, he laid his hand upon the handle of his knife.

“What!” exclaimed the sergeant, briskly, all the better feelings of manhood being roused—“What! would you dare to threaten! since coaxing won’t do, we must try other means, I see. Do not attempt to



draw out that vile weapon. I believe I ought to take it from you altogether—but if I allow you to carry it to cut your bread and meat, that's all. Dare but to speak of it, much less wield it, in hostility to aught that is French, and by heavens I'll have you rolled from the topmost peak of our frontier hills down into Spain again, just as you and your fellows roll down the bales of woollen which you smuggle from one side to the other!"

This burst of eloquence and metaphor which finished it; produced the desired effect on the scowling ruffian, who slunk back into the house, brushing irreverently past one of the monks who came forward to appease the sounds of discord, and to interfere in favour of the unhappy cause of the quarrel. This monk, who had hitherto escaped my notice, was nevertheless a remarkable figure. He was young, tall, sallow, with an eye that protruded ardently, as if propelled by the frantic enthusiasm which evidently filled his brain. He wore a dark brown cassock, with a cross of white woollen on the breast, the Capuchin uniform, and a broad brimmed hat banded by a string of beads. A rosary hung at his right side, and a long sabre, in a brass scabbard, which he had contrived to conceal from the searchers, was exposed at the left, as in his energetic movement he flung aside the folds of his drapery. He rushed into the road, and with gestures of animation and sincerity he threw his arms before the forlorn figure of the Cagot, and fervently addressed his compatriots in her favour. Whether his harangue or the sergeant's was most effective, I do not pretend to say, but the Spaniards all retired sulkily to the house; and the priest finished his office of charity by slipping a small piece of money into the Cagot's empty hand, unmindful of the larger one which she still held in the other.

During the progress of this scene, the Cagot never changed her position, nor seemed conscious that the bustle applied to her. It was evident that long suffer-

ing and degradation had bowed her down too low, to let her believe herself of even sufficient consequence for the curses that were heaped on her, much less for the interest she excited.

"Here, old brute," most brutally said the woman of the inn, speaking from the window; "take back your basket, give me the money, and be off with your unlucky looks—a curse is upon you and your odious race." The poor Cagot moved quickly to the spot, took her basket of provisions, and gave the piece of money, which was received with contemptuous caution by the woman, as if its very touch carried infection. The wretched purchaser, thus spurned and trampled on, murmured a blessing on her insulters, probably the mechanical effect of her accustomed terror, and turning her back to the inn, she quitted the village, at a pace much quicker than I could have supposed compatible with her emaciated limbs.

A continued sleet and piercing north wind, combined to render the morning most uninviting for pedestrians like me and Ranger. As he sat shivering by the door, exchanging looks of curiosity and wistfulness with the Izards beyond the valley, he showed no symptoms of an inclination to go abroad. I had quite as little; but I could not reconcile myself to the fate of passing even a portion of the day with even a portion of the occupants of the inn. I therefore resolved to brave the inconveniences of the weather, and to strike off into some of the valleys out of the beaten track to Pau, for which town I knew the Spaniards to be bound. I very seldom took a guide during my desultory rambles in the mountains; but on this occasion I thought it necessary to have one, until I should fall in with some farmhouse or cottage, that would afford me a night's shelter. I therefore proposed to the innkeeper's eldest son, a stout lad of about fifteen, to take me under his charge; and he readily accepted the office, for the promise of a slight remuneration. He was, however,

obliged to assist in serving breakfast to the Spaniards, and in preparing the mules and horses for such as meant to pursue their journey, before he could enter into my service; and I was thus forced to delay, much beyond the time required to despatch my bowl of chocolate, with rye bread, fresh butter, and a slice of cold dried *saucisson*, altogether an excellent breakfast.

Several of the Spaniards, men and women, straggled off on their wandering course, among them the chief ruffian, who (as he lounged away alone and apparently unallied with any of the party) threw one gleam from the smothered fire of his eye on my friend the sergeant.

"Adieu, comrade," cried the latter, gaily, "should we ever meet again, I will thank you for that parting glance."

"Perhaps we may," was the reply.

"Perhaps," echoed the sergeant.

"That's not very likely though," said I: "chance meetings of this kind are not to be looked for again; and I for myself am sorry to say good bye to you, with not much hope of an opportunity of returning all your civility."

"Who knows?" replied the sergeant: "we soldiers lead a roving life in these mountains now-a-days. I am going off to-morrow myself to one of our most dreary out-posts, and we may stumble upon each other once more before you quit the country. Good bye, Sir, good bye! Take care of yourself, and if *you* meet that scoundrel, pray leave him one side of the road clear for his own company."

We shook hands and parted, he turning all his attentions to the Arragonese woman, who made no preparations to leave the place; and I taking to the road with my guide and my dog, in one of the worst moods for travelling that a man could possibly experience.

In pursuance of my plan, I struck into the valley

of Heas, which lies to the eastward of Gedro, for the double advantage of being sheltered from the north wind, and of examining the chapel, dedicated to the Virgin, which stands in that lonely vale, and which on two days in the year is the scene of a pilgrimage composed of a multitude of pious peasants from all parts of the mountains. The entrance of this valley promises beauty and variety of scenery, being planted with elms, ash, and maple trees, ornamenting rich pasturages at each side of the river, which, like all those in that part of the country, bears the common name of Gave. But after a short time all becomes dismal and desolate beyond description. Neither tree nor shrub of any kind relieves the monotony of this desert. Masses of shattered rocks encumber the plain, and one huge block was pointed out to me by my lively guide, called by the name of *Caillou de la Raillé*, held in considerable veneration as a resting-place at which all the pilgrims who visit the desert chapel stop to say their prayers—at the foot, if they are old and infirm; on the summit, if they have youth and activity sufficient to allow of their scrambling up.

About half way in the valley, but before we came in sight of the little chapel, an opening to the right displayed the dreary valley of Estaubé. There was something inexpressibly and unaccountably attractive in its sombre and desolate appearance; a spell-like influence that leads one on, in wonder at the frame of mind which makes men court such naturally repulsive scenes. The day was in unison with the dreariness of my feelings, and this desert vale associated well with it. I asked my guide where the road led to; he replied, "To the foot of *Mont Perdu*." The very name of this mountain was so truly in accordance with the whole scene, that I at once resolved on traversing the vale; and I was more firmly fixed in my determination, when in answer to my inquiry, if there were any habitations in that direction, he said, "Yes, a few huts belonging to the Cagots."

Since the adventure of the morning, my mind had continually reverted to all I had ever read or seen of that unhappy race of beings proscribed by the prejudices of men from all the rights and attributes which should be common to all, and bearing in the loathsome deformity of their universal disease a virtual badge of infamy, which seems placed on them by the hand of nature itself. As I walked on, I conversed with my intelligent companion about these unhappy people; and while my reader may suppose me to be moving onwards through the sad d<sup>é</sup>filé, overhung by black and livid clouds, and parched by the frozen breath of the keen and cutting wind, I will sketch in another chapter as much as I then knew of the poor people with whom I was about to make a more practical and intimate acquaintance:

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### CHAPTER III.\*

Lost in the labyrinth of time and defying all traces of history and tradition, there has been for ages, in the Pyrenees, a race of beings whose very existence is an enigma that never can be solved. They are scattered in Béarn and Navarre, and the valleys of Barèges, Aure, and Luchon, and some of the minor and almost nameless gorges of the mountains, are frightfully populous with these living libels on humanity. They are without exception, deformed, infirm, imbecile; articulating imperfectly; afflicted with incurable and monstrous *goîtres*, and uniting together the smallest possible portion of mental power, with the utmost excess of bodily degradation.

\* The following are the authors to whom I am indebted for the materials of this chapter and the note at the conclusion of the volume : Ducange, De Gebelin, De Marca, Ramond, and Palassour.

The curiosity of the historian, and the compassion of the philosopher, are alike excited by the existence of this unfortunate people, who are not confined to the Pyrenees alone, but dispersed along the western parts of France for nearly its whole extent, and in every respect similar to the *Cretins* of the Valais. The derivations of their name are as confused as the traces of their origin; but they have been every where and at all times the objects of the same abhorrence, and the victims of the same inhumanity. In the solitudes of Lower Brittany, they were in the most distant times treated with savage cruelty. In periods more civilized, the parliament of Rennes was obliged to interfere to procure them the rights of sepulture. They were then and there called *Cacous* and *Caqueux*. The Dukes of Brittany fixed on them a badge—that last and worst mark of slavery and tyranny combined, for pointing out the victim to all the excesses of injustice—it seems to imply impunity to the baseness that is ever too ready to inflict them. In the island of Maillezais, near Aunis, they are found under the name of *Coliberts*, synonymous with slave. In Guienné and Gascony, where they are called *Calets*, the desolate swamps and arid deserts afforded them an almost unsupportable refuge. In Navarre they were sometimes designated *Caffas*; and, finally, in the ancient Comminges, Bigorre, and Béarn, as *Cagots* or *Capots*, they were reduced to the very extremes of indignity and persecution. There they were, in the fourteenth century, publicly sold as slaves; there, as elsewhere, looked on as infamous and accursed; admitted into the churches by a separate entrance, with seats apart, and even a distinct *benitier*\* adapted for their use. In many places the priests would not admit them to confession; seven of their number were considered only equivalent to one witness from any other class; they were forbidden to walk with

\* The vessel which contains the holy water.

feet or legs uncovered, for fear of imparting contagion; and they bore on their wretched dress their distinctive badge, the foot of a duck or goose, implying, no doubt, some insult now not easy to understand.

Manners less harsh, and the gradual spread of knowledge which must ever carry toleration in its track, have somewhat tempered the rigour of their fate, and softened the aversion of the other inhabitants of the countries they are found in. But still the extent of their degradation is proportionate to the changes which have affected every other community. No census of their numbers has ever been taken, as if their very existence was a disgrace, as it is indeed a reproach to the country. They are not allowed to carry arms; nor suffered to exercise any trade but that of a carpenter or wood-cutter, which are considered as ignoble as they are themselves. Every mean employment is confined to them; malady and misery are their only heritage; and if law does not set its seal upon their brutalized condition, a proscription as powerful has stamped it with a fiat that seems as irrevocable as the wretchedness it perpetuates.

We thus see them as they are, a race of slaves, of whom the origin is lost in the gloom of the dark ages; a rejected caste, enveloped in a mystery which no research can penetrate, amongst whom tradition has perished with the rights and dignities of man, and which presents a sad and silent monument of those times which have transmitted to us naught but what is odious and deplorable. The people of the country, antiquarians, and the poor wretches themselves, are equally ignorant of the source of their indignities, and the epoch at which they commenced. Conjecture and fiction have united in going back to the remotest periods, and ascribe to the ravages of leprosy the horror which its victims inspired; but it was but lately that any attempt was made to reconcile to reason the surprising conformity of name and fate, which

distinguishes the various tribes of a people separated by distances so great, and so long and so utterly without communication with each other.\*

For my own part, having felt some interest in the Cagots, and carefully studied the different theories about them, I confess myself pleased to leave their origin and their existence unexplained. To me, it does not appear more extraordinary that they should have been as they now are from the first, than that they *are* as we now see them. And I am well inclined to let them rest in their present wild and impressive obscurity, an anomaly in all the existing varieties of mankind, unaccountable and mysterious, combining all that can excite the vague and shadowy imaginings of men, as to beings

“ Who look not like the inhabitants of earth,  
And yet are on it.”

The mind, baffled in all the beaten tracks of reasoning, might better embark on the pathless sea of hope, in search of a safe harbour for these wrecks of human nature. We might, by imagining the possibility of their amelioration, lead to plans for their relief; and instead of useless efforts to account for their miseries, make practical attempts to remove them. Could a sympathy be but once excited for these outcasts, the natural benevolence of man would feel the electrical touch through every link of social feeling; and that the elements for our sympathy exists, is not to be doubted. In their desert retreats these forlorn and attainted individuals still fear that persecution may attack, while they hope that compassion may relieve them. There are to be found amongst this people—the most poor and wretched upon the face of the civilized earth—some of the finest primitive affections: and while contemplating with shame the narrow cir-

\* For further particulars relative to the Cagots, see Note at the end of the volume.



cle into which man may imprison his fellow man, we have at least the consolation of knowing that he possesses in himself the power of dissolving the shackles he has forged; and of burying the memory of his own injustice, in an oblivious flood of charity and atonement.

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## CHAPTER IV.

"You do not intend, Sir, to go any farther up this dreary valley?" asked my guide (after we had advanced near a league,) in the usual tone and general manner of putting a question, which one wishes to have answered in the negative.

"Yes, I do, though," replied I, "for two reasons, my lad. I feel myself not well—my bed was damp last night, I fear—and I must seek for some house that will afford me lodgings for the night."

"Then, Sir, you must come back to ours, for between this and the frontier line there is not a human being nor a habitation."

"Why, you told me, a little while back, that some Cagots lived in these parts!"

"Oh, Cagots! yes, but you don't count them for any thing, or their huts either, I suppose?" said he, inquiringly.

"Lead me to one of them, and you shall see," was my very unsatisfactory answer. The boy, with mingled interest for me and detestation of the Cagots, laboured hard to convince me that it was little less than insanity to trust myself in the contamination of their hovels. And finding my hardihood unshaken, he seemed to shrink from me, as if the repugnance with which he regarded the association I projected had thrown its shadow over his good feelings towards myself.

While we held this short parley together, I felt myself growing extremely unwell, for a violent cold had taken sudden possession of my frame. I hastened on, towards what I looked to as the shelter, and what my guide considered the infection, of some Cagot's hut: and I grew impatient at the mist and the murky clouds, which shrouded the sides of the hills, and prevented us from distinguishing any object at all distant. As we turned round a huge block of granite that lay almost across the path, the boy, who was straining to catch a view of a secluded gorge, which he knew to contain one solitary hut, turned abruptly to me, seized me by the arm, and pointed in silence to a spot about twenty yards from the side of the path. I there observed, coiled up like a snake, or in the position which he himself would have called, *la rosca del galgo*,\* the gloomy and repulsive Spaniard—the very last of my acquaintance whom I could have wished to encounter in such a place. I never felt better satisfied at my common habit of carrying a gun in these parts, even when I had no chance of meeting game; and my guide had a perfect accordance of feeling with me on that point, for with a pleased and significant look, he whispered, “Is it loaded?” I gave an affirmative nod; and we went on, our eyes turned with a sort of fascination upon the object which neither of us admired. We had recognized the champion of the Faith by his dress, and the form of his figure, which I had seen displayed in the same position the night before, when he lay on the floor of the inn at Gedro. I know not whether or not he slept on the present occasion any more than then; but his face was towards the earth, for the purpose, as my guide insisted, of holding converse with some of the spirits of evil with which that solitude was reputed to abound. I marvelled much at the circumstance of this lonely ruffian, having thus singly strag-

\* The Greyhound's roll.

gled upon the desolate track; but I reconciled his appearance with the notion that such a place must have had a most magnetic power upon a dreary vagabond like him: and, recollecting the parting caution of the sergeant, I passed quietly forward, without disturbing the feigned or actual slumber in which the fellow lay. A few hundred yards left him shadowed in mist; yet I could not from time to time resist my inclination to look back, in the expectation to see his tall form, magnified in vapour, striding on with giant step and tortuous movement. But he did not again appear; and our attention was taken from him by the faint sound of a cascade, murmuring sadly, like the voice of some mountain spirit, that sent its wailings on the desert. Such was the notion which flitted across my brain in that scene, so fit for magic and all its wild illusions. My mind was suited to the desolate tone of nature. I was ill; fever was in my blood; and my imagination seemed to move in mist. It was in this frame of feeling, and while I mechanically followed my guide, that these straggling notions of enchantment took the consistency of the verses which I afterwards committed to paper.

#### SONG OF THE MOUNTAIN SPIRITS.

When all is calm in the torrid sky,  
Yet the eagle, hovering far on high,  
Turns quick and flaps his ruffled wing,  
And seems to shrink from some viewless thing—  
'Tis then we sport on fields of air,  
Unseen within our wide dominion,  
Fan the proud bird that hovers there,  
And scare him with our noiseless pinion.

When waves lie hushed upon the main,  
And thistle down floats not o'er the plain,  
And flowerets droop by lowland rills,  
Yet tufted verdure moves on the hills—  
'Tis we who rush from mossy cells,  
High o'er the bed of drowsy ocean,  
Fling o'er the hills our fresh'ning spells,  
And shake the grass in magic motion.

Read on yon pine tree's silver bark  
Our scripture legends wild and dark—  
The mystic charter graven there  
Sways the rude spirits of the air!  
Beneath the Pole star's quivering light,  
Grouped round its stem our crews assemble,  
And mortal wanderers of the night  
Hear our unholy mirth and tremble.

They tremble! yet a darker hour  
Shows forth the mountain spirits' power—  
From cloud to cloud, we rush along,  
The thunder peal our choral song—  
And from our torches, flung around,  
We hurl the lightnings bolt of death—  
Till, echoing to our shouts, resound  
Wild shrieks from smoking vales beneath.

As we approached the little cascade, whose voice became at every step more loud and hoarse, a gloomy gorge opened upon us to the right, and the foam of the angry water appeared through the mist like a moving column of snow. The rocks over which it fell were soon however visible, and the rugged path that led up their sides in almost perpendicular ascent.

"Now, Sir," said my guide, "you may see the Cagot's hut, perched on that shelving rock, but scarcely to be distinguished from it. You see the smoke blown loosely by the wind?"

"I do," said I, "and here we may part—for I am resolved to make that hut my lodging for the night."

"Well, Sir, since you *will* do it, it does not become me to dissuade you further," said the boy, with a mixed look of sorrow and anger in his face. And as I gave him his fee for his advice and attendance, he turned away, thinking me no doubt a most incorrigible and incurable patient. Resolved not to risk an encounter with the dubious occupant of the valley behind us, he took his way up the mountain towards the westward, in which direction lay the gorge I was entering upon; and bounding across the little cataract, as agile as a wild deer, he was soon lost to my sight in the mists above.

I then stood alone in that dismal spot. I knew that I was close on the frontier line, and at the very foot of Mont Perdu, but I could not distinguish any object two hundred yards distant, and the thin smoke curling from the roof of the Cagot's hut was all that gave signs of animation to the scene. This lowly habitation stood on a patch of earth that covered a projecting ledge of rock which hung over the bleak ravine. The land surrounding the house was rudely cultivated, and showed a cross of dwarf vegetables, intermixed with a few shrubs, and here and there a pine tree, the seed of which, wind-wafted to the clefts of rock, had taken root in the spongy soil. Upon advancing closer, I saw a couple of goats browsing on the patches of furze and coarse grass, which coated the face of the rock; but no inhabitant appeared in or about the hut, as far at least as my glance could penetrate its secrets, through two small windows in the front, and as many behind, looking upon the little garden and down the ravine. The door was closed; but there was not altogether that air of filth and desolateness about the place which I had before observed to surround the habitation of the unfortunate class of beings. Ill as I felt myself, and in want of repose and warmth, I did not perhaps see things in their true light, but fancied them better than they were, from my satisfaction in being within their reach at all.

I advanced, and gently tapped at the door. A bustle seemed excited within, at this intrusive and no doubt unusual sound. I knocked again, and heard low, quick whisperings, as if of stifled alarm. I once more, and more loudly, repeated my demand for entrance, and at length the door slowly opened—and I started back with surprise, to see upon the threshold, the figure of the poor woman, who had so much excited my attention the same morning at Gedro.

The recognition, to my still greater wonder, was evidently mutual; for, from what I had seen of her

at our last meeting, I supposed her to be so utterly imbecile as not to possess the commonest power of observation. But I was in this mistaken: she remembered me well and kindly; and the air of trepidation and terror, which filled her countenance as she opened the door, was in an instant changed to an expression of pleased security—the most repulsive, certainly, that I had ever seen of its kind. Assuming the gentlest tone I could command, not to alarm the poor old creature, I said that I was glad she had got home safely with her provisions. She gave me a ghastly smile of thanks, and seemed quite overpowered by my few words addressed to her in a way so unlike that to which she was accustomed. She did not, however, venture to speak, much less to invite me into the house; and I was unwilling to alarm her by abruptly demanding permission to enter. I asked her if she was alone.

“No, not quite,” replied she, with hesitating, and almost inarticulate tones.

“Is your husband within?”

“No, he is cutting fuel in the forest.”

“Then, who pray, have you in the house?”

“Why, Sir, it is only my poor daughter.”

This reply was uttered with fear and trembling, and as the old woman spoke she threw her looks alternately back into the house and at me, as if the safety of her precious charge had been in the most imminent danger. I was too ill to laugh outright, but I could not help smiling at this maternal alarm: the very notion of this daughter was so disgusting to me, that I for a moment felt utterly repugnant to enter the house; and I acknowledged a passing excuse for the aversion, so common to the people of the country, against these unfortunate beings. I soon, however, recovered from this impression; but feeling myself getting worse every moment, I was resolved to take the place by storm, if I could not obtain an amicable admission. I therefore said, in a manner as gentle, but somewhat more firm, than before,

"Well, well, you have nothing to fear from me, for yourself or your daughter, depend upon it—you are helpless women—and you carry your protection with you." She took these words in their common meaning, and evidently felt no offence; but she did not ask me in. I was therefore forced to put the question plainly.

"Now, my poor woman, will you have the kindness to let me enter your house, for I am fatigued and ill?"

I thought I could clearly trace all the fermentation, arising between her wishes and her fears. She dared not refuse me—she was inclined to admit me—but was terrified lest some sinister design might have lurked in the extraordinary circumstance of a stranger visiting this lonely refuge of proscription. I read all this in what is called the index of her mind—but there was a secret page in the volume, which all my study did not enable me at that time to understand.

"Come, come," said I, as soothingly as I could, "Fear nothing, for you have nothing to fear. I am not disposed to do you any harm; on the contrary, as you must have seen this morning, I am inclined to do you a service."

The fact was that I had added a trifle to the monk's charitable donation, which it was not worth while to mention before, but which had its weight in the scales wherein the poor Cagot now balanced her thoughts.

"Wait an instant where you are," said she, shutting the door, which I heard her bolt inside. I leaned against the wall, and in a few minutes the door opened again, and she fairly asked me in!

"You may now enter, Sir," said she, "and welcome, but have mercy on two poor lone women, pray do!"

Good Heavens! thought I, what does the old creature dread? She has surely no money to be robbed of? and what other temptation is there here? I pass-

ed the threshold thus thinking; but I only *said*, "Be satisfied, my good women, you really have nothing to apprehend."

The daughter for whom the old woman felt all this alarm, or at all events the chief part of it, sat in a corner spinning. She was as far as possible from the fire-place, which contained a very comfortable blaze; and as I looked at her I saw every limb trembling, while the flax vibrated in her fingers, like the thread of expiring life about to be severed by the fatal scissors of the Fates. This nervous object, whom I so unintentionally alarmed, was, like all the younger women of the Cagot race, close wrapped in her dark grey capulet, which covered the head, and being closely drawn about the throat (most likely from the negative effect of vanity, which hides a defect as readily as it exposes a charm,) the *goitre* was not perceptible, and this lessened in some degree the rising nausea, which I found it so hard to suppress. I saw the torture which my presence caused, and I did not wish to add to it by inquisitive observation. I contented myself, therefore, with a hasty glance at the pale face peeping out from her hood. Her eyes were cast down, and the lids almost closed. Her other features appeared rather well formed, to my hurried glance; and I was afraid to let it linger a moment longer, lest some movement might display the loathsome swelling, the very thought of which was sickening.

I sat down on a low chair beside the fire, and Ranger, without ceremony, took possession of one corner of the chimney. The other was occupied by a large grey cat, whose green eyes glared, and who raised up her back, hissing fiercely her dissent to the intrusion. She formed a fitting member of the domestic trio, and I should not have been surprised had I discovered a *goitre* under the fur of her neck, for she had a genuine Cagot eye and air. Neither of the women spoke a word. The one sat trembling, and



the other stood motionless. I felt anything but comfortable, independent of the increasing sensation of illness. There is always an awkwardness in being in a place where one knows one's self not welcome; but it is increased tenfold when you are convinced that fear is the motive which keeps back the expression of discontent. That was exactly my case just then, and I felt a thousand times more embarrassment in the hovel of these poor outcasts, than I should experience in the presence of those haughty pretenders of rank and wealth, who glory in creating sensations of perplexity, but whose arrogance only rouses the scorn of an independent mind.

To my several efforts to commence a conversation, I could get but monosyllables from the mother, while the daughter was sullenly silent; and I should never, I believe, have succeeded in exciting the positive attention of either, had they not perceived me to be evidently and seriously ill. I was attacked with the shivering which is the general precursor of feverish colds, and the girl did not tremble more violently from her terror on my entrance than I did in a quarter of an hour afterwards. As the women gazed on me, I saw them put their heads close together, and heard them whisper in cautious tones. They consulted on my case, and as they seemed satisfied of my harmlessness, their compassion was excited in my favour. At length the old woman approached me, and, in a tone as distinct as she could assume, she told me I was welcome to remain in her house as long as I found it convenient, and that she only lamented the poorness of the accommodation. I was astonished at this unhesitating expression of confidence and kindness, and more than ever confirmed in my hatred of the prejudice which pronounced the unhappy Cagots to be devoid of the common feelings of humanity. Put thus at my ease, by finding that my companions were in some measure recovering theirs, the discomforts of illness were no longer increased by the con-

sciousness of intrusion. I admitted the sympathy of the old woman, and thanked her for it, in a manner, I must believe, as sincere as the feeling it expressed; for the girl, raising her head for an instant, whispered, in the rude *patois* of the mountains, "We have nothing to fear from him."

"Indeed you have not, my poor girl," replied I, in the same dialect, in which I had become tolerably conversant, and in which the old woman had always spoke, although she sufficiently understood the French in which I had replied. But this incautious betrayal of my learning had an unlucky effect on her to whom it was addressed. The girl seemed quite frightened to find that I could speak, as well as understand the *patois*. She gave one hurried glance of surprise from a pair of large black eyes, which instantly sank again, and I could not induce her to speak another word.

The old woman began now to make active efforts to relieve me. She added fuel to the fire, and she proceeded to prepare for me some whey of goat's milk and vinegar, letting me know that I might, if I chose it, retire to an inner room, and occupy a bed for the night. This communication was evidently the result of a suggestion from the younger of my hostesses, with whom the old one kept a constant telegraphic communication of nods, and winks, and signs. I was taken by surprise by this offer of a lodging, for I had scarcely contemplated its being probable, or even possible. When the offer was actually made to me, I could not help shrinking from its acceptance; and had I not been so much indisposed, I should certainly have preferred trusting to a mountain walk, in search of other quarters, to coming into contact with any thing belonging to my revolting companions. I nevertheless muttered an imperfect acknowledgment of assent and thanks; and while my kind nurse prepared the whey, and a ptisan, made with dried lime-tree blossoms and other ingredients, I had time to examine more particularly the place I was in.

## CHAPTER V.

THE room in which I sat, served, like the entrance-room of most cottages, for "parlour, kitchen and hall." It wore any air rather than that of the misery usually connected with ideas of a Cagot's hut. It was very decently furnished with tables and chairs, a dresser with crockery-ware, a sufficiency of cooking utensils, and even a few glasses and other conveniences beyond the wants of beggary, or even of a state of moderate indigence. The floor was clean swept, and every thing in an orderly state. In a small room, or rather closet, beside the fire-place at the side next the entrance, I observed a coarse but decent bed, which I concluded to belong to the old couple; and beyond the chimney was a similar recess, furnished as its fellow, and this I understood was to be appropriated to my use.

Where then, thought I, is yonder sallow-faced and interesting damsel to pass the night? But being rather nervous on the subject of any detail in the family arrangements, and fearful of touching a delicate chord, I ventured no inquiry whatever. In the meantime, the damsel in question, but not in demand, was busily occupied, and as actively so as was consistent with a limping gait as she walked, in making preparations for my bed-room; and she really seemed to employ herself about my comforts with so much alacrity, that I felt some qualms for the ingratitude that made me still look on her and think of her with an unaccountable feeling of loathing. I could bear the presence of the old one better, for there was not any of those involuntary wanderings of thought with respect to her which one cannot suppress sometimes in relation to less antiquated females. Imagination could find no resting-place in her wrinkles, nor tread the mazes of her scanty grey hairs. It was hard to judge of the girl's age from

her figure, the deformity of her lameness, and from my scanty views of her colourless cheek. She might have been about twenty, but had she been a hundred, she had not been more secure from my inquiries or intrusion. Chance, however, led me into the secret of her dormitory; for I observed her on one occasion to open a little door at the farther corner of the room from the chimney-side where I sat, and she entered a recess that I thought must have either composed or led to the place of her rest; but my inquisitiveness was quite content to remain outside the sanctuary. The dress of both these women was as far removed from the appearance of actual want, as were the household appointments. The girl wore, beside her grey cloth capulet, which was almost, if not quite new, an under dress of nearly the same kind of stuff, with very good shoes, and blue worsted stockings, displaying feet and ankles by no means coarse or large. The old Cagot was very decently dressed. Instead of the tattered wretchedness of her morning costume, she was now covered with clean and comfortable clothing; and it was clear to me that her half naked appearance at the inn was assumed for the purpose of concealment or imposition.

There was altogether in the air of every thing I saw, enough to excite the curiosity of one fond of seeking adventures, and not unaccustomed to meet them. I made up my mind to the fact that some unusual cause existed for this appearance of comparative comfort and holiday attire. The seclusion of the scene, and the circumstances of the times, favoured the notion that this hut might be the place of rendezvous for some political intrigue, and for persons requiring better accommodations than a family of miserable Cagots: and the chance of observation and treachery might account for the alarm caused by my visit, better than any dread of mere harm to property or person, where so little temptation existed for either. It was thus I debated with myself, and I was strength-

ened in my belief of some mystery by the anxiety evinced by both women that I should betake myself to bed, which the old one, however, naturally enough accounted for, by recommending repose as the most likely relief to the illness I suffered under.

Anxious, nevertheless, to see whether any new light would be thrown upon the state of things by the appearance of the old wood cutter, I was resolved to wait for his return before committing myself to bed; and to beguile the time and satisfy my curiosity, I commenced the following conversation, which went on by snatches.

"Why, my good woman, you don't seem to want for comfort here?"

"Poor creatures like us want little of any thing, Sir."

"You must have some kind friend who gives you the means to support yourselves so decently?"

"Indeed, we sometimes get a little help?"

"But chance very seldom leads a charitable traveller into this desert?"

"Ah, Sir, charity might find a home even here?"

"Then tell me, my good dame, is it for charity that you keep this spare bed ready, so clean and snug?"

This question was clearly a puzzler, and caused serious embarrassment to both my hearers. The girl with seeming indifference to what was said, kept very busily occupied in getting matters ready for my accommodation, but I could observe her, now and then, to stop; and with her face averted, as if she looked for other things, she evidently listened attentively, to what passed between myself and the old woman, whose answers were always preceded by a long pause and an interchange of looks, and sometimes even of whisperings with the girl. To my last stated question I could get no reply, I was therefore resolved to put it still more plainly.

"Come, come, tell me the truth," said I, "don't

you expect some one here to-day, whose bed I am about to occupy?"

The old Cagot, with more address than I could have expected from her, avoided the very appearance of having heard my question. She poked the tongs into the fagots, which were blazing round a machine, in shape between a pot and a kettle, which contained water for bathing my feet; and she examined the vessels intended for my whey, with that apparent earnestness, which we often see in the eyes of those, whose minds are as empty as the vacancy they gaze at. But this silent hesitation was an eloquent answer to my demand; and it confirmed me in my belief, as much as the most ample confession. Being thus satisfied, as to what I had before but suspected, I did not further endeavour to wring an unwilling revelation from my hostess; but I was gladly preparing to trust my aching head and feverish body to the bed, which I suspected to be at the bottom of this secret, be it what it might, when the noise of a bundle of wood, falling outside the house, called off the attention of the women, and somewhat aroused my own. "My husband," exclaimed the old woman; "my father," murmured the young one; and they both moved to the door, to admit the lord and master of the place.

The hurry of the women was positive evidence of their anxiety to guard against an incautious betrayal on the part of the person expected; and rapid whisperings, as they stood outside, confirmed it. Having, as I supposed, announced the presence of a stranger in the house, they both returned with the old man, who had profited by their caution, and showed no surprise at seeing me. He had deposited his bundle of sticks outside, and he carelessly sat down upon a stool, bowing to me, and uttering a short sentence of welcome to his hut. Like most of the males of his unsightly race, he was diminutive, weakly, and dull, but not altogether so repulsive in appearance as those of the other sex. I was too seriously ill to attempt

the labour of extracting any information from him, and indeed my anxiety to know more about the place I was in, was yielding to the languor which insensibly oppressed me. Returning therefore the man's salutation, by one as brief as his own, I arose from my seat, to go towards my bed room, when I was arrested by the appearance of a strange figure, which I alone perceived through the window that looked upon the garden in rear of the house.

The first thing which attracted my notice was the head of a man, peering above the rocks, which bounded the garden towards the ravine, and the scrambling position of his hands and arms, showed that he was with difficulty climbing up. But in a moment or two, the whole person appeared vaulting with a light bound across the rugged breast work, and safely landed in the garden. The figure thus hurriedly presented to me, was extremely curious, but I had no time to examine it minutely. Stooping to lift up a long staff, which had been probably flung forward as he gained the summit of the rock, the man without further hesitation, ran actively across the little space, and reached in a moment the window through which I perceived him. Putting his face close to it, he gave a loud and familiar shout, which seemed mixed with a chuckle, as if he meant to join the sound of good news to the notice of his arrival. Whether the effect produced was alarm, astonishment, or pleasure, I could not then determine; but his shout was answered by a shriek from both the women—the old one transfixed to her position close to me, with the vessel for my foot-bath in her hands—the young one rushing from the little room, which she was finally preparing for my reception, and instantaneously throwing open the window, making signs of caution to the new comer, and rapidly addressing him in a low tone, but clearly admitting him to be an old acquaintance.

In accordance to what she seemed to say, he only

whispered a word or two, and he came immediately round to the entrance, where she met him.

"It is a poor pilgrim," muttered she, as she limped briskly across the floor, addressing me in her suppressed and timid tone, but with her face averted, as if afraid of betraying somewhat more than she ventured to say; and as the stranger paused upon the threshold, rapidly uttered a blessing, which was clearly ready made for such occasions, I had time to look at him attentively. His presence performed a temporary miracle upon me, for either I forgot, or my nerves actually shook off for a few minutes, the illness which had before and did afterwards oppress me.

The man before me was of the middle size, but he stooped as he stood, and thus took at once from the height and activity of air which he possessed just previously in the garden. He now leaned on his staff, and wore the look of middle age, the reality of which appearance was belied by anticipation, as he sprang upwards from the rock. His whole costume was such as we have seen worn by the representations of pilgrims in pictures, or in Carnival times, but such as had never before met my observation in the motley masquerade of real life. His head was covered with a broad brimmed hat, round which was a string of cockle, muscle, and other shells, indicating the pilgrim's visit to the sea-shore, where probably the term of his penance had ended. His sharp, shrewd features seemed out of character in the disguised air of solemn piety which he endeavoured to throw into his countenance; and I thought an arch smile seemed playing on his compressed lips, and in his twinkling grey eyes, but not easily to be detected through the hair coming down over his forehead, and the bushy beard which covered the lower half of his face. He wore a dark blue frock coat with a large cape coming close up to his throat, which was bare; and round his waist was a leathern belt, fastened with a broad brass



buckle, and thickly studded, as was his frock-like body dress, with shells of the same description as those which decorated his hat; a pair of loose dark pantaloons came down to his ankles, and coarse shoes and cloth gaiters completed his dress. Across one shoulder hung a wallet, suspended by a leathern strap, and at his girdle was a wicker covered bottle, an ebony crucifix, and a little basket. His whole attire bore marks of rough travelling, as if he had come by tracks more moist and muddy than even the narrow path trod by the mountaineers and their mules.

While he muttered his entrance prayer, making occasional signs of the cross, and other motions with either hand, I could distinctly remark the acute glance with which he surveyed me rather than the house, in which I was quite prepared to see him perfectly at home. His incantation ended, and his speech, as I thought prepared, he opened his lips and began in French—

“I have given my blessing to this habitation, and all those it contains, inhabitants, and *strangers* as well—for there is one at least within these walls.”

An air of mock divination, and heavy emphasis accompanied these words, which were plainly directed to me, and meant to make a powerful impression. Had I been in my usual good state of health, I should have richly enjoyed the tricks of this imposter, let the affair have ended as it might; but just then I was too ill to relish his antics, for the charm of his first appearance was beginning to subside. I, however, put on an air of profound reverence, and gave the expected stare of astonishment at the amusing knowledge displayed by the pilgrim. The old man and woman were too stupid to comprehend these niceties of deception, or to play a very complicated part. They therefore remained passive spectators, and the girl only quietly handed a seat to the venerable personage, to whom she did not presume to make any reply.

"Worthy people," continued he, "will you kindly give a meal and a night's lodging to a weary pilgrim, returning from the performance of his painful penance, which led him from Lille, on the frontiers of Flanders, called for its beauty, the Paris of the North, to the chapel of our Lady of the Ascension, on the shores of the Mediterranean, close to the City of Barcelona in Spain, where he said fifty aves and served fifteen masses for the repose of the soul of Joseph Jacques Demarle, killed by him—that's *me*, the said pilgrim—in a fit of passion, one night at a tavern debauch."

Nobody answered this harangue; but the pilgrim took silence for consent, and freely drawing a chair by the fire-side, he began to disembarass himself of his accoutrements, and spoke as he went on—

"Heaven will reward you for this, kind Christians; and for not despising the lowly confessions of a sinner, who must tell in humility the crime he suffers for, to all whose bounty he solicits—that's part of my vow," said he, in a brisker tone, and nodding at me, as if he could not continue ~~any~~ longer the serious mockery he assumed.

"Your crime does not seem to lie heavy on your conscience, reverend pilgrim," said I.

"Why the deuce should it?" said he, "when I have handed it over to the good monks of Saint Marival, and prayed the soul of my poor victim fairly out of purgatory full a fortnight back? Come, mistress, what can you afford a poor pilgrim in the eating line? It is fast-day, but I have a dispensation. And mark me, Mademoiselle, could you give me a cup of water from the well in the garden there? I shall add a few medicinal drops from my flacon, prescribed by the holy physician of the convent, the very morning it was sacked, and the brethren driven out, by the sacrilegious band of that arch reprobate, Mina."

"You have left troublesome folk and a busy scene behind you, it seems," said I.

"Yes, and not far off either," replied he.

"The frontier line is not the sixth part of a league from this house, and the hostile parties are almost within gun shot of each other, close to us."

"You have entered France, my good pilgrim, by a dreary and unfrequented path," continued I; but there was something inquisitorial in these observations, and he perceived it, for he added, pointedly enough—

"Yes—I came by the almost impracticable pass of Bielsa, on my way to fulfil a vow at the chapel of the Virgin, in the valley of Héas, hard by; but there is no place so desolate or sacred, that heresy and Englishmen won't creep in."

This very broad hint was spoken with a sharp and significant nod, which made it pointedly personal, but it was my turn to play the actor, and not wishing to draw down any further retort that might betray me to the Cagots, I prosecuted my examination of the pilgrim no further. In order, however, not to display any symptoms of consciousness, I asked if the Constitutional force was pursuing the fugitives of the Faith?

"Aye, that it is!" cried he, in a most animated tone, and his eye sparkling with pleasure, but he recovered himself in a moment, and added,—“Yes, the enemies of our holy religion are for the time successful. The brave and pious champions of the Faith are forced to retire. Even Misas and Miralhes, Eroles and Mata-Florida, the bravest and best of the Royalist chiefs, are beaten back; and Mina, with his lieutenant, Count de Linati, and the gallant Melchior de Trevazos, called *El Vengador*, the avenger, are treading on the very limits of France this moment.”

This last sentence was uttered with a renewed forgetfulness, and a genuine animation of tone, which had power over his hearers as well as himself; for even the Cagot-girl jumped from the stool on which

she sat, and clasped her hands either in surprise or sympathy with the pilgrim's evident delight.

I was myself right glad to hear of the triumphs of the Constitutional leaders; but finding that the pilgrim was playing a double part, I did not chime in with either his pleasure or his lamentation, but heard the expression of both with apparent indifference. It was, moreover, very clear that he was no stranger in the Cagot's hut. I did not exactly know by what opinions I might be surrounded, or among what sort of folk I might, ere long, be entangled. This pretended pilgrim was a very questionable sort of character, and was very likely to be followed by others, not a whit more correct. I therefore resolved to be extremely reserved and circumspect in my remarks and conduct, and I thought my safest quarters would be found in bed. The old woman once more urged me to retire, and I saw that my presence was an incumbrance to the whole party. I accordingly prepared to go, and I was resolved to make my exit with a civil speech to my fellow lodger.

"I am afraid, my good friend," said I, "that I have forestalled the accommodations which would have been yours, but for my intrusion. But being unwell, I must keep the bed which chance has given me, and I hope you will be able to find a corner to repose yourself in for the night. With this hope I wish you light slumbers, and good cheer."

"Good night, Sir, good night," said he. "First come, first served, is a common proverb, and you are heartily welcome to be its illustration. As for me, hard beds and hard fare have been my lot for some time, particularly since my friends, the monks, have been dispossessed; but I hope I have a chance of finding wherewith to enable me to eat and sleep here, although the place does not promise much at first sight. God bless you, Sir, and here," (opening his little basket,) "to help your recovery, take this charm. Do not despise it—'twas blessed by a holy man—tie

it round your neck, and 'twill not make you sleep the worse; for, used with faith, it will keep off the nightmare, the cramp, and bad dreams."

He here gave me this amulet, consisting of a little bag of white leather, marked with a scarlet silk cross, and tied with a black ribbon. I took it as gravely as it was offered; and turning towards my sleeping-place, I cast an involuntary glance into the opposite recess, which I had before conjectured to be the bedroom of the girl. I saw enough to convince me that it was a chamber of larger dimensions than my own, and appointed in a style superior to the rest of the house. Part of a curtained bed was evident; and, rather to my satisfaction than my surprise, I observed a Spanish guitar hanging against the wall, with a cloth cloak, while some books were scattered on a small table. All these appearances confirmed my conjectures as to the sometime visitors of the hut; and I stopped short to make further observations, when the girl, who with the old woman was in attendance on me, stepped before me, and shut the door of the room. I took the hint thus given; and a short time sufficed to have my feet bathed by the kind old woman, and to settle me in a bed, wonderously well appointed for the place it was found in.

"Now, Sir, sleep soundly, and have no fear; my daughter or myself will watch, lest you should want any thing," said the old woman, quitting my closet, and leaving the door ajar.

## CHAPTER VI.

WHATEVER might have contained the charm—whether the pilgrim's leathern bag, which I carefully hung round my neck, or the old woman's medication—I slept soon, and soundly for several hours. When I awoke, far in the night, as I found out by feeling the hands of my watch, I was in a high degree feverish, and in considerable pain of head and body. I had a confused and half delirious notion of all sorts of disagreeable things connected with my visit to the hut—loathsome Cagots, the ruffian Spaniard, the suspicious pilgrim, all mixed together in combinations of annoyance. I forgot where I was, and started up in my bed. But a moment or two brought the truth of my situation clearly to my mind; and a light, glimmering through my imperfectly closed door, and busy whisperings in the next room, told me that the family, with their friend and visitor, had not all retired to repose. My throbbing head was not in a state to attend to what was passing, even could I have overcome my aversion and contempt for *that* method of gaining information. But I could not avoid catching an occasional word of the conversation; and I heard the names of Mina, Linati, and Don Melchior frequently repeated, without any coherent sequence which could lead to a betrayal on the part of the speakers, or a discovery on mine, of whatever secret might be joined with these names. The conversation was carried on with great animation, and certainly in French, so I was convinced that the Cagots had no part in it. I thought I could distinguish the pilgrim's quick and sententious manner of speech, but no tone above his breath allowed me positively to recognize his voice. The other was, as it were, muffled in still lower whisperings; so that it was impossible to ascertain whether it came from male or female.

I certainly felt some feverish reflections pass rapidly through my brain as to the strange scenes amidst which I was placed; and having sense to know that I was, in my present situation, utterly at the mercy of persons and events, as they might arrive, I made up my mind to let things take their course, without worrying myself with hopeless conjectures. But although thus in every way disinclined to listen to the conversation, I could not restrain my curiosity to get a sight if possible of the speakers. I therefore cautiously raised myself in my bed, and stooping forwards, not being embarrassed by curtains, I was enabled to see into the outer room without running any risk of being in my turn observed.

The first thing which caught my eye was a man sitting in front of the fire-place, whose comparatively youthful appearance and close shaven face, formed a strong contrast to the thick-bearded adventurer I had left in the same position when I went to bed. Beside him stood a table with remnants of an analyzed repast; and beyond it, with her back to me, sat a female figure, of which I could distinguish nothing but its generally graceful contour, and a head covered with flowing ringlets, which appeared dark as jet, as they hung upon the shoulders that, like them, were buried in deep shade. She leaned one elbow on the table, and as her head rested on her hand, I fancied a pensiveness in the attitude, which seemed to speak a whole story of anxiety and interest.

The man was talking rapidly, in all the constraint of an under tone, but with evident respect, and using gestures expressive at once of his earnestness and of the active nature of the scene he was describing. A word or two incautiously pronounced in a louder key, as if his voice gave the slip to his prudence, caused the female to raise her finger with a warning motion, and the knowing smile he gave in reply, made me almost start, from its resemblance to that which I had remarked so particularly in the pilgrim. In fact,

another glance of scrutiny convinced me it was that pious masquerader himself; and I rapidly observed that he wore precisely the same clothes, only that they were divested of all their shell-work ornament, and other accessories, as completely as his face was of the distinctive decoration of penance and pilgrimage.

At this instant, as fate would have it, one of the most indiscreet symptoms of cold in the head escaped me—a loud and sudden sneeze, which alarmed me almost as much as those I had so minutely observed. The pilgrim jumped up. So did his companion, and with a light and graceful step she darted across the floor to the distant end of the room. I laid myself down, quickly but quietly, at full length, and gently drew the bed clothes up close to my chin. Three or four consecutive repetitions of my treacherous sneeze made it impossible to feign sleep, so I uttered an accompanying moan or two, to give the appearance of my being self-disturbed. At these sounds, and holding a little copper lamp in her hand, the dimly lighted, half-hidden figure of the Cagot girl came limping into my room; a dark cotton handkerchief which was tied over the close hood of her capulet, gave evidence of her having slept or been prepared for sleep during her time of watching. I shrunk involuntarily from her presence into the retirement of the bed-clothes. There was something nauseous to me in the notion of her sallow cheek, her lameness, and the hidden *goitre*, which was exaggerated by imagination, mixed with the cunning concealment which she aided in practising as to the persons outside. I therefore told her, in a very gruff tone, and in a few words, of Patois, that I wanted nothing, and that she might retire. She took me at my word, and the withdrawing of the light gave silent notice of her absence. I therefore looked boldly up again, hoping to catch a second glimpse of the mysterious female who had so much excited my curiosity and interest. But I saw nothing,



the door having been drawn as close as its imperfect construction would admit of, by my repulsive nurse; and I only heard now and then a faint whistling from half-opened lips, like the echo of the lowest possible whisper.

The effects of this temporary excitement soon passed over, and I became more violently oppressed with pain and thirst than I was before. I however took copious draughts of the liquid preparation which stood beside me, and after some time, I again sunk into an imperfect slumber. From this I was awake, or rather aroused, for I could scarcely say I slept, by the sound of footsteps in the garden close to my window. An occasional pause seemed to mark that the person, be it who it might, stopped at intervals to listen at the windows, or perhaps attempt to peep through the crevices of the temporary shutters; and I suffered somewhat of that vague annoyance, almost always excited by uncertain and imperfect sounds. Something more positive came however very quickly to give me more serious cause of inquietude, for the lamp having been suddenly extinguished in the outer room, my door gently creaked upon its rustic hinges, and I heard some one groping his way cautiously about the walls, until his hand came in contact with my gun, which I had as usual deposited in the corner nearest to my bed. I heard the barrel grating against the wall, as the secret hand withdrew it from its position. I confess that I felt at the moment extremely uncomfortable, so much so as to prompt an immediate measure, which might, in the apprehension of treachery, have been considered a desperate one. I sprang suddenly up, stretched out my hand at random, but in the direction of the one I intended to arrest, and caught a firm grasp of a sinewy arm, covered with a cloth sleeve.

“Stop, whoever you are, and let go your hold of that gun!” said I, in a suppressed but steady voice.

No violence was offered to me; but a second hand

was placed on mine with a pressure of entreaty, and a voice, which I instantly knew to be the pilgrim's, begged of me not to be alarmed, protested that nothing wrong was meant to me, but that suspicious sounds outside forced him the speaker, to borrow my gun, as the only weapon of defence which the house afforded. I was somewhat re-assured, but not quite satisfied at this rapid explanation: but I had no suspicion of the pilgrim, who had, from the first, won a species of confidence, by the frankness and gaiety of his air, which bore more of frolic than insincerity in it. I therefore loosened my hold, saying,

"Well, my friend, I prove my confidence in you, and I trust to your good faith."

"You may do so, implicitly," said he, seizing my hand, and registering this assurance by a cordial pressure. He quietly stepped back to the other room, and I sat up in my bed to listen to the result of his proceedings.

After a few minutes of doubtful silence, I heard the footsteps again, retiring from the close neighbourhood of my window; and in a little more, a knocking at the house door gave the signal of the intended entrance of friend or foe, as the case might be.

"Who are you that knocks, and what do you want?" fiercely inquired the unbearded and unshelled pilgrim, double-cocking my gun, and looking I dare say as resolute as ever did Peter the Hermit or any of his followers.

"The blessing of Saint Geronimo be on the house!" replied a rough voice, in Spanish, "open, for a soldier of the Faith, in the name of God and of the King!"

"That's not *our* watchword!" said the pilgrim, "what is to be done?" addressing himself to some one beside him, who answered in a whisper. This I thought could be only the strange female, and my curiosity made me stretch myself to the foot of my bed, and close to the door, through the opening of which, I cautiously peeped; but to my great disap-

pointment, I saw only the girl of the house, in her most ungraceful night dress, who tremblingly held by the pilgrim's arm.

"Open, good Christians," continued the voice outside, "you have nothing to fear. It is but a benighted soldier, alone and unarmed."

"If I was sure of that!" exclaimed the pilgrim, with a suppressed stamp of his foot, and jerk of one arm, and then scratching his head, in evident perplexity.

"Open the door, for the love of ——"

"Have patience, then! by the life of my saint!" growled and swore the pilgrim, with no example of patience or of sanctity, and in just such an attempt at Spanish as might be expected from a pious wanderer, who walked across the hills to Barcelona and back again.

"Can there be a plot?" inquired the pilgrim of himself, but he got no satisfactory answer. "Yes, yes, I must let him in, and confide in the Englishman—there's nothing else for it," continued he; and addressing himself to the girl, he added, "do you conceal yourself—nothing in the shape of a woman must appear before these rambling vagabonds of the Faith. Pray go in, and keep very quiet."

According to this advice, the girl crept across the floor, and entered the door of the secret apartment. The pilgrim took up the little lamp, which he had relighted, and came close to my bed. The reader will recollect that I had before clearly seen and recognized him, when stripped of his disguise; but he, not knowing that, thought it necessary to caution me against any abrupt suspicion. He therefore hastily said, as he entered,

"Now, my good Sir, pray, let me entreat you, do not be alarmed at my change of appearance—you are ill and feverish, and may not recognize me—but I am, that is, I was, the very identical pilgrim you saw and talked with to-night. But you see I have got rid of

my beard and my dress, and my vow, for in fact my pilgrimage is over and I am on my way home. But this is no time for explanation—there is danger near us—and I cannot believe that you are in any plot against any one in this house—are you? Now, do tell me honestly and frankly.”

“No, on my life and honour,” replied I, “but I am ready to assist in its defence.”

“You are?” cried he, cutting short my heroics. “Give me your hand, then,” and seizing one, he started, looked with a most pathetic air full in my face, and exclaimed—“Good God, Sir, you are in a high fever—how flushed you are! your eye is in a blaze—Oh! if I had but Father Munoz, the convent physician here!”

“Whack, whack, whack, whack!” said the heavy fist of the person at the cottage door.

“Saints, devils, and martyrs!” roared the pilgrim, “keep quiet I say.” Then turning to me, “For the love of heaven, Sir, don’t stir.”

“Open the door, good Christians,” whack, whack! went the tongue and fist outside; while the pilgrim went on, turning alternately from me, and to me.

“Go to the devil—Pray keep cool—(whack, whack, whack!)—May you never eat nor drink—swallow large draughts of ptisan—(“Open, open the door.”) May you perish from cold!—Cover yourself well with the blankets—(whack!) May the frost pinch you!—Encourage perspiration—And the wind whistle through you!—And keep yourself warm—(whack, whack!) Keep quiet!—lie still—I’m coming—I’m going—I’ll open the door—I’ll shut the door—(whack, whack, whack!) May curses seize you!—May God bless you, Sir!”—and pushing me back into the bed, from which I attempted to rise, he rushed into the outer room, slammed my door after him, and opened the other, cursing the intruder with all his might and main.

"Health and wealth!" exclaimed the Spaniard, in the proverbial greeting common in his country, and with a cringing expression.

"Furies and the devil!" retorted the pilgrim. "Who and what are you, that disturb poor people thus?"

"Is it possible?" said the Spaniard, in an astonished tone.

"What! Sanchez! Is this *you*?" cried the pilgrim.

"What has become of your beard?"

"Where is your cassock?"

"And you have *not* been shot?"

"And *you* have really escaped hanging?"

"I have, indeed," said the Spaniard. "That fool, Don Melchior, pardoned me, and let me escape—"

"But you may meet again!" said the pilgrim.

"Perhaps we may!" muttered the Spaniard.

Every sound of the voice tended to convince me that this was no other than the ruffian I had seen the preceding day. At this last expression, the very same as his parting words to the Sergeant at Gedro, I could not resist my desire to be sure of him. I therefore leaned forward, at the risk of discovery, and caught the glare of his dark eye, and saw his hand laid expressly upon his knife.

As soon as the Spaniard had recognized the pilgrim, he spoke French to him with great fluency; and a conversation now began between them relating to some former acquaintance, the particulars of which I could not follow; but he, not knowing so disturbed and harassed by interruptions and curiosity, mixed with occasional anxiety, that I really was, as the pilgrim said, in a high fever. My head swam and burned, my mouth was parched, and I lay almost insensible to what passed in the next room.

\* *Salud y pesetas*, is one of the *rinfrances*, with which the conversation of Spaniards abounds. *Pesetas* stands for riches in the proverbial application.

But the pilgrim, after some time, paid me a visit, and told me that the Spaniard was asleep before the fire, and that there was nothing to apprehend. I did not think this apparent slumbering any proof of security, if there were any danger in the fellow's being awake; and I told the credulous pilgrim to be on his guard, if he had any secrets to conceal.

"Let me alone," said he, "I know the scoundrel I have to deal with. He *does* sleep now, depend upon it, for I took good care to mix one of my *charms* in his brandy—just the same, my good Sir—pray don't be angry—as the old woman put into *your* whey, and to which you owe the sleep you have already had."

I saw that this fellow had not lived in a convent of Capuchins for nothing, but that his friend, Father José, had taught him some of his tricks; but I nevertheless could not help liking him, and having faith in him. Such is for me the irresistible charm of a frank and cordial manner. I found myself, however inclined, totally unable to profit by the communicative disposition of my companion; who gain any information on the secrets of this hideous incidents of which were becoming every hour more mysterious and dramatic. I listened to the ci-devant pilgrim; but could scarcely reply, and I regretted to find that, however open he might be as to a part of his own affairs, he was double locked, and barred, and bolted, in respect to others.

"You must keep yourself," said he, in the kindest manner, "quiet!—lie still!—and by pressing matters to this mouse. I must let away this sleeping ruffian with me. He is of the army of the Faith, and he has reason to believe my opinions the same as his own; but I should blush before any Englishman not to avow myself the very reverse. I must however keep up the farce with him, and get him from this place. He wandered here by chance from a gloomy love of solitude. He is a prime villain, and has just escaped

from death by means of the very man he attempted to assassinate, but who was warned of his purpose by a friend. His intended victim was no other than the Avenger, Don Melchior de Trevazos, the bravest, the noblest of men. But I must leave you—yet it grieves me. Still, you may rely on it, you are in safe hands. The old people of this hut will take good care of you; the young woman will be kind to you; and I have learned from the fellow without, that Father Munoz, a most skilful though a young physician, and a conscientious though fierce enthusiast, is at a village close by, where he intends to rally some stragglers of the faith, to repass the frontier, and oppose Don Melchior, who has driven them before him like sheep. I will send for this monk to see you; and, in the mean time, should any other strangers arrive, pray have no suspicions—take no notice of what passes—and expect to see me shortly again. God bless you once more—there is your gun—keep quiet—and all will be well with you.

I returned the cordial squeeze of his hand, nodded assent to his suggestions, and wished him a safe journey. He immediately left me; and in about half an hour afterwards, the dawn just then breaking, I heard him rouse the Spaniard from his sleep, and they quit-  
ted the house together.

## CHAPTER VII.

No sooner were they gone, than the old woman, who with her husband had kept close while the Spaniard remained in the house, came cautiously into my room, and finding me awake, she commenced a series of inquiries into my illness, and prescriptions for its removal. She told me that the worthy and pious man, who had completed his pilgrimage and resumed his own proper character, had given her a letter to take to Gedro to deliver to a Spanish monk, the same, as she believed, who relieved her so humanely the previous morning, and who, being skilled in medicine, would come to see, and, she hoped, to cure me. She added, that she was just setting out; and, in the mean time, having replenished my jug of diet-drink, and her husband being about to start on his daily task of wood-cutting, she left me and the house to the care of her daughter.

I almost shuddered at this announcement; but ill as I was, I had a gleam of hope that I might possibly, through the girl, get some insight into the proceedings of the concealed heroine, (for I was resolved that she *should* be one) who, I was certain, still remained hidden in the house. This notion made me avoid the expression of my disgust, at the prospect of being left at the mercy of the young and *goitred* guardian thus promised me; and I abstained from any hint or allusion, which might lead the old woman to suspect my knowledge of her household matters being deeper than she supposed it.

I lay still and silent while she spoke, and I soon heard her and her husband leave the cottage. I concluded that *both* the females, now, with me, joint occupiers of the house, still slept, to recover from the fatigues of their disturbed and watchful night. I



thought repose in every way, essential to myself, to give me strength to prosecute my inquiries, or indeed to meet the possible contingencies, to be expected from the ambiguous parting words of the pilgrim. I therefore once more strove to sleep, and I succeeded. When I awoke again, I found myself much refreshed, and looking at my watch, I perceived that it was not quite eight o'clock.

My anxiety to know what was going on in the other, and most mysterious, part of the house, induced me to rise from my bed, and venture on a cruise of discovery to the next room. I threw the coverlid across my shoulders, and in this costume, quite à la Cagot, I slowly and incautiously slid out of my closet. The window-shutters having been opened by either the pilgrim or the old woman, I had a full view of the chamber and its contents. The table showed that the time had not been idly or badly spent by the travellers. The remnants of bread, cheese, eggs, and sausages, with glasses that bore marks of service, told a tale of good cheer and abundance. On the table stood an ink stand and some paper, with unfinished scraps of writing. These excited my attention more than any other of the fragments, and I could not resist letting my eye glance for a moment on the scribbled and defaced lines before me. I at once discovered the writing to be in a neat female hand.—One or two words, "Father, Mother," and what looked like "duty, honour," and "unbounded attachment," were all that I distinguished: for the reader may believe my honest assertion, that I did not—indeed I *could* not—let my eye rest *more* than a moment on the page, any more than I could let my ear lie for an instant against a door, always excepting cases which involve personal safety or the like.

I cast a wistful glance at the door of the secret chamber, where I was convinced so interesting a subject of inquiry lay concealed. But whether it was

feeling or fever that refined or rarefied my sentiments, I know not; yet they certainly were at the moment quite too pure to allow of my taking one unauthorized step towards the gratification of my intense curiosity. I accordingly turned into my own quarters again, cautiously avoiding a glance at the room which the old Cagots occupied, and not venturing to look behind me for fear of discovering the appearance of the young one, in all the unloveliness of dishabille.

But I was scarcely laid again in my bed, when a timorous tap at the door, and half uttered inquiries from the girl, convinced me that I was not to escape from her persecuting attention. I answered, without looking up, that I was quite well, and wanted nothing whatever. But, from that strange impulse which leads us to look at the things we loathe, I could not resist a stolen half glance at this girl, asking her at the same time—

“Are you dressed already, my good girl?”

“Dressed!” echoed she, in a tone of surprise, as if astonished at my imagining the contrary; and she muttered something in unintelligible and imperfect *patois*.

“Pray, don’t be offended,” said I, “it was only that I did not wish to disturb you so early.” And I saw at the same time that she *had* had the delicacy (or the conceit) to wrap herself up, throat and all, full as closely as she had been covered the day before. She was retiring from the door, and I became emboldened in proportion as she was timid. I thought I might venture some inquiries, so I said, in accents of more civility than she was accustomed to from me—

“You were very much disturbed, I fear, last night, as well by me as by other visitors.”

“What?” asked she, with all the vacant emphasis of stupidity.

I repeated my observation distinctly.

"Yes, indeed, you did," was her unmeaning reply, accompanied by a sort of abortive laugh that was quite shocking. I would not venture to look at the countenance moving in idiot sympathy with these tones; but I was determined, my eyes firmly closed, to prosecute my efforts for information. I thought that the only way to succeed with her was to take her by surprise—to beat down her guard, as I might say, and carry the outworks of her caution by a *coup-de-main*.

"And pray," exclaimed I, quickly, "how is the young lady in the other chamber, after such a bad night?" The girl was too far off, and too much shaded by my door, to let me see her face; but as she might have seen mine, I spoke as abruptly and sternly as I meant to look.

"What?" answered she.

"Come, come," cried I, impatiently, "tell me, like a good girl who is the female that—" But just at this important stage of my cross-examination, I was interrupted by a voice outside, volubly uttering, as the speaker entered the hut—

"What! the house empty—the garrison fled—guns all spiked, I suppose—and, perhaps, a mine ready to spring and blow me up! Ha! I ask you a thousand pardons, Mademoiselle, for entering so unceremoniously by this ready-made breach, and without a summons to surrender. By the fire of those consuming black eyes, and that rosy blush on your cheek, my dear, I hold you and your whole sex in adoration! Permit me to salute your hand. Nay, don't be frightened, nor shrink away from me after that fashion. Always show a fair front to the enemy, and never turn your back on a friend. That's one of the golden rules of life—so, do now, my lass, give me one embrace."

I really did not hear the girl's reply. I was so provoked at this proof of gross want of taste—at the promiscuous gallantry which could make love to a

*Cagot*, that, for the moment, my displeased surprise stifled the satisfaction at first given by the sound of my friend the sergeant's voice, for the reader will have recognized him in the new comer.

"What! you will neither kiss me, speak to me, nor look at me," continued the sergeant. "Why, what do you tremble for, my good girl? Do you think I would do you any harm? By the life and honour of a soldier, I would die first! So, like a sweet, modest little darling as you are, tell me, where is the sick gentleman who came here yesterday evening; and tell him that his friend, Victor Achille Pas-separtout, sergeant of the ——th infantry of the line, wishes to see him."

"Come in here, sergeant," cried I, "if you can tear yourself away from the charms of that tempting creature."

"Ha! ha! my friend, you are there, are you? So, so, this is your illness, is it? A fit of mountain gallantry—a heart-burn—an amorous ague? I thought as much——" and as he entered, with these words, his cap and feather were knocked off his head by the door frame, although he was a short man, and stooped as he came in. In recovering his head-dress, he stumbled against my bed, and he commenced a series of curses on his awkwardness, and apologies to me, until, looking me full in the face, he saw that I was really ill; and he then, with great kindness, began to inquire into my case, and begged me to excuse the levity with which he had treated it. He offered me all sorts of assistance, proposed sending to Luz for the surgeon of his regiment, and took as much (though a different sort of) interest in my illness as one sometimes meets from one's nearest relative and heir at law. I declined the sergeant's offers of aid, telling him that I was in hopes of seeing the military monk, of whose medical skill I had heard high praise.

"What!" cried the sergeant, "would you trust yourself into the hands of that fellow? Why, when he finds you out to be an Englishman, and a heretic, he would think nothing of giving you a passport for purgatory, (in the shape of a dose of physic.) Aye, or for another place, a stage farther on. I know Spain and the monks right well."

"And I know something of human nature," thought I, "of the good side of it too; and I am sure that the man who relieved the poor old persecuted Cagot yesterday, cannot be converted into a fiend to-day." So I thanked the sergeant for his caution, but told him I had no fear of treachery.

"Well, well," replied he, "perhaps you are right after all. I am not a suspicious man—I am dull-sighted enough when my own safety is in question, but I am lynx-eyed for that of my friends; and you may have the satisfaction of knowing that if this priest should poison you, I will have him hanged on the highest pine tree in the district."

I could not help smiling at this consolatory promise, and the sergeant, fancying he had quite composed me, began a detail of his privations in a little temporary shed he occupied since day-break, with a party of ten privates, on the very selvage of the frontier, and in sight of the hut where we were.

"Egad, you can see it from this window," said he, pointing across the ravine; "and there stands the sentry, striving to warm himself in the smoke from our kitchen-fire. He has laid his firelock on the ground though. Very well, he shall have an extra hour for that negligence."

I looked from the bed, and plainly distinguished the turf and moss covered hovel, which resembled the worst kind of huts in the bogs of Ireland and the Scotch highlands; while the smoke, forcing its way up through the sods that formed the pastoral kitchen, and the grey coated sentinel who stood beside, brought

forcibly to my recollection the whiskey stills I had so often stumbled on, in trespasses almost as illegal as the secrets they led to.

While I was thus occupied, I observed my visiter keenly reconnoitring the room without, and eyeing the covered ways of the female fortress he had before been approaching.

"Come, come, sergeant," said I, peevishly, "this is too bad: how can you look at, or think of this wretched Cagot girl, with her sallow cheeks and loathsome goitre?"

"Softly, softly, my friend," replied he, in an under tone, "don't hurt her feelings so; she hears you, and her blushes cover her ears."

"Blushes, indeed!"

"Aye, upon my life, like roses on an olive tree. And hark ye, my friend, don't you be so nice in your tastes—beggars can't be choosers. A Cagot girl in these deserts is as natural as a duchess in Paris. Women are women every where. They have all alike their charms for me—I worship the sex—and am idolater enough to admire a protuberance on the throat, just as much as though it were lower down. But, by the gods, the girl without has a pair of eyes blacker and more burning than any I ever met with."

"Well, well, worship their sacred fires; but let it be in secrecy and silence, that's all I ask of you."

"Agreed, agreed, my friend, my devotions shall not disturb you, depend upon it. I would rather remove than add to your fever, believe me. But hold, can I be mistaken? It is surely he—yes—I know his lounging gait."

"Who do you see?" asked I, while the sergeant strained forward at the window.

"That rascal Spaniard, I was forced to check so abruptly yesterday. I thought he was lurking somewhere hereabouts, for the boy who told me of your being here, recounted your having stumbled upon him yesterday; and, to tell you the truth, I was brought

here by my anxiety to step between you and any treachery on the part of that scowling blackguard."

"Many thanks, my good sergeant—I have nothing personal to apprehend from him; but he is a bad one, I have good reason to know, and I cannot think that any good design brings him here now; he should be going in another direction."

"You know something of him, then?"

"Enough to warrant what I say, and to enable me to put you on your guard. He understands and speaks French well."

"We are but even there," said the sergeant consequentially—"for I speak Spanish like a Spaniard—just the same."

"You told me that yesterday," replied I.

"Yes, and proved it too, I think," added he; "for how else could I have so soon won my way into the affections of that haughty Arrogonese Countess? How else carry by storm the bulwarks of birth, pride, rank, piety, and the devil knows what? Now I'll wager that you didn't discover her to be a countess?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I did," said I, smiling; "for she appeared as common a person as any of her party."

"Cunning angel that she is!" cried he, clasping his hands—"Egad, I musn't forget my appointment with her though. Good bye, my friend, for a while."

"I'll certainly send for our doctor for you—Adieu!" and he was going off rapidly, when he suddenly added, "The Devil! I had quite forgot that scoundrel—but there he is, winding up directly here; and looking round him as if he were watched, or afraid of being so. There he goes, sharp by the angle of that rock, and into the path leading up to the door. I will stay quietly here, and we shall soon see what he is about."

"Caution the girl not to tell him you are in the house," said I.

"Sweet little dear! I will whisper it closely and softly to her," said the sergeant, stepping into the out-

side room, where he buzzed a few words in a delicate tone; and he came back sideways on tip-toes, blowing kisses from his fingers at every step, as he looked amorously over his shoulder.

"Now, my good sergeant, said I, "remember that the ruffian carries his long knife, and you are unarmed—and though ever so well inclined, I am quite unable to help you in a contest with him."

"True, egad," replied he, looking rather anxiously around, "I had forgotten that—but here is your gun."

"Exactly what I was going to observe to you—it is loaded, and makes you more than a match for him."

"It's all one—it's all one—gun or no gun, I should fear little from an encounter with such a fellow:—but are the flints good—the powder not damp—is it loaded with ball or shot?—not that I care a sou about the matter, but since one has such a weapon by one—"

"One may as well make the most, while one seems to make least of it! Isn't it so, sergeant?" asked I abruptly, and cutting him short in the middle of a speech, such as we often hear from men who, not satisfied with being sufficiently brave, lessen their own merit in affecting to underrate their enemy, and see more glory in the pretence of despising danger than in the pride of overcoming difficulty.

"Why, as for the matter of that—" said the sergeant—

"Hush!" whispered I—"I hear his heavy tramp at the threshold," and in a moment more the outer door creaked back on its rusty hinges.

"God be praised! Good morning, my lass!" said the Spaniard, in mechanical devotion and surley gaiety, and in French, a striking contrast to the cringing tone of his salutation in his own language, as he entered the hut the night before, and was so roughly welcomed by the pilgrim with my double barrelled gun in his hand. "Good morning, I say; why, you do not seem to welcome me. You would rather have



seen that vagabond imposter—that ci-devant pilgrim—Eh? But he is far out of sight now, and I am as much master here as he was last night, do ye see—so look cheerful, and give me some breakfast.”

All this was said with an air of insolent brutality; and I saw that the sergeant was quivering in every limb, not from fear of the ruffian, but with anxiety to attack him. He sat on the side of my bed, the gun across his knees; and his legs involuntarily kept up the nervous motion familiarly called “the Devil’s tattoo.”

“Keep steady,” said I, “or the creaking of the bed will betray you before your time.”

“I cannot contain my rage!” muttered he, every word half a dozen times its original length, from the chattering of teeth and stuttering caused by his emotion.

“You are quite alone,” asked the Spaniard.

“Quite,” replied the girl.

“Your father and mother are from home?”

“Yes.”

“Then give me the gun that your friend, the pilgrim, left here behind him this morning. Give it, I say,” continued he, in a boisterous tone, which proved that she hesitated at his first demand—“Give it to me, or, by the Virgin, I’ll sacrifice you on the spot!”

The sergeant bounced up, but I held him back, by the scanty skirt of his jacket, and forced him down upon his seat.

“I will not give it to you—take it by force if you durst, and you shall be hanged for the crime, like a robber and a villain as you are.”

Such, as well as I could catch her *patois*, was the girl’s reply, delivered in a firm and gallant tone, astonishing to me, even though I knew her to be aware of protection against the Spaniard’s fury.

“Bravo!” exclaimed the sergeant, jumping up once more, and he was rushing from the room, when

I threw myself after him, caught hold of his arm, and whispered—

“Not yet—not yet—let him commit himself fully.”

“You are right, my friend,” stammered he, stopping close to the door, while I lay down again in bed.

“Insolent reptile!” vociferated the Spaniard to the girl’s reply—“Odious and loathsome Cagot, you are not worthy my revenge; but let me pass—I will have the gun—and here I begin my search.”

“You shall not enter there while I have life,” cried the girl. At these words, I heard the rapid closing of a door and a key turned quickly in the lock. I knew immediately that it must be that of the secret chamber, where I was now more than ever convinced the lovely female was concealed; and, in addition to my head-ache and fever, I burned and shook with an anxiety full as forcible as the sergeant’s. I prepared to quit the bed abruptly when the sergeant in his turn held me down.

“Not yet—not yet—” said he; “let the villain attempt violence.”

“Stand back, wretch!” roared the Spaniard, and a clatter of chairs or tables told that a struggle was commenced.

“Help, help!” screamed the girl.

Whack! sounded the door of my room, as the sergeant burst through it—and smack! said the butt end of my gun, as it came in contact with the Spaniard’s head, with a force which I thought must have shattered the stock, or fractured the skull. A war-whoop yell accompanied the the sergeant’s blow—the heavy carcass of the Spaniard flopped against the floor—the girl shrieked—and just as I emerged from my room, the blanket thrown hastily round me, I saw her disappear into the secret chamber opposite; and heard the door forcibly bolted inside.

The Spaniard lay on the floor; the sergeant flung himself upon him, holding him by the throat, thundering forth execrations of untranslatable variety and

vigour; while Ranger, unexpected by the whole party, darted upon the prostrate ruffian, and shook and worried him with all the energy of tooth and nail. Satisfied that the girl was safe, the sanctuary she defended and fled to secured, and the Spaniard stunned and disabled, I looked about anxiously for wherewithal to bind him, and soon found a piece of rope, used by the old Cagot for tying up his fagots. With this, the sergeant and myself bound the Spaniard's arms well behind his back, with less tenderness than he might have experienced from the most brutal executioner—in fact we had no mercy on him. I took his formidable knife from its sheath; and on examining my gun and the fellow's head, I to my great surprise ascertained that neither was materially hurt by their momentary junction and instantaneous divorce.

During the whole of this process, which did not occupy much more time than what might be consumed in reading this record of it, the enemy, as I may fairly call our prisoner, showed the most evident symptoms of a craven and contemptible spirit. He was overwhelmed with astonishment and terror, at the suddenness of the assault and the probable consequences of his subjection. But he did not utter a word, his scowling visage looking unspeakable things at the sergeant and myself. The former was too busily employed, in double-cording and in double-cursing his foe, to pay attention to the contortions of pain, fear, and fury, so strongly depicted on his countenance, while every knot that he tied, and each additional twist he gave the rope, drew forth a panting interjectional snort, that seemed to come from the inmost depths of the sergeant's nervous system. He ceased at length, and taking his knee from off his victim's carcass, he wiped the sweat from his own brow, and looked round pleasedly at the security which he had earned by it.

As the Spaniard rolled and writhed upon the floor, the sergeant could not restrain the expressions of his

delight. He had no moderation in his triumph, and thus proved himself an imperfect hero. So I trust my readers have not begun to take him for *mine*. As for myself, I had played but a very inferior part in this drama; and its being so happily concluded, left no further necessity for my presence; so I wrapped my blanket closer, and retired to my closet, leaving the sergeant to the enjoyment of heaping loads of abuse on his fallen foe. As I crept into bed, not much the better of all my exertions, I heard the following fragments of my trusty ally's reproachful apostrophe, to his victim, over whom I saw him standing:—

"Yes, you scoundrel, you are there, thanks to this good arm and this brave heart!" (slapping his hand upon his breast, three or four times;) "aye, twist and turn like a snake that has lost its sting," (flourishing the dagger-knife over his head.) "What! you are muttering, are you?—invoking some rank devil, I'll warrant it; but you must pray with your hands unclasped, and let your elbows knock together, closer than they ever did, since you gave up your dancing master. You villain! to attack a poor defenceless woman! Woman, the loveliest, the most angelic of earth's blessings, or man's delights! Woman! the masterpiece of nature!"

And so he ran on, in the very superlative of bombast and burlesque, for longer than would be supportable in the recital; and he was at length stopped only by the entrance of the old Cagot woman, and of no less a personage than Father Munoz himself, who had obeyed the call of his quondam friend the pilgrim, and came promptly to my relief, for which he had been summoned.

"Mary, the most pure, I salute you!"\* piously ejaculated the monk, but this short prayer was all I could distinctly understand.

\* *Ave Maria purissima!*—the entrance salutation of a pious Spaniard.

## CHAPTER VIII.

FROM my situation in the closet bed, I was not able to observe the effects of this arrival on the countenances of the various parties to the scene without; and little information was to be gathered from the confused babbling which immediately took place. The sergeant burst forth into a vituperative attack against his prisoner; the old woman sent out screaming inquiries for her precious little girl; and the medical monk, totally forgetting the object of his visit, uttered pious and sorrowful ejaculations at the scandal to his country and his cause, in what he saw and heard of his compatriot's situation and conduct. The ruffian did not speak a word.

The old woman at length succeeded in learning where the girl had taken refuge; and I saw her enter the chamber, into which she was cautiously admitted through the half open door. She came out in a very few minutes, and crossed over to pay me a visit. She had acquired ample information as to the cause of the sergeant's presence in her hut, and the still more unwelcome intrusion of the Spaniard, and she opened upon me a battery of blessings, and thanks for the part I had taken in the rescue; and then made anxious inquiries as to my illness. All these matters I cut as short as possible, being chiefly alive to the subject of my own curiosity; and, without any regular plan for coming at information, I at last found some.

"Pray now, my worthy dame," said I, "do tell me, without keeping up the mystery any longer, how is the lady in the opposite room, for I know all about the secret of her concealment? Has she been much alarmed? Come, come, answer me frankly; I tell you again I know the secret."

"Oh! pray then, Sir, for the love of Heaven, do

not betray it to any one of those persons outside; Mademoiselle would be ruined were it known."

"Never fear, never fear; I will be discreet, but how is she?"

"Oh, pretty well, Sir; she has great courage, but this was almost too much for her—the risk of discovery was dreadful."

"Yes, if it had not been for your daughter, that scoundrel would certainly have found her out."

"Sir!" said the old crone.

"I say it was your daughter's spirited resistance, that saved the room door from being forced open, and the lady from discovery. Did not they tell you that?"

The woman looked stupidly at me, as if all her stock of intelligence had been exhausted; but I did not, as I have before remarked, find her dullness so disgusting as the girl's, and seeing that my mention of her daughter did not touch her sympathies, and that she began to busy herself about my ptisan, et cetera, I let the conversation drop, satisfied with the confession I had obtained as to the concealed female, and delighted to hear that she was still, as I might say, within arm's length of my observation.

While I ruminated on all that was passing, the voices in the outer room suddenly ceased their clamour, and the sergeant came in, the gun in his hand, and seated himself beside my bed. The old woman immediately retired, and I saw her slipping into the secret chamber, which opened instantly to her gentle knock.

"Well," said I, to my panting and exhausted companion, as he wiped his oozing brows; "well, you have done your work in good style; but why do you lose sight of your prisoner? He may escape."

"Leave me alone for that, my friend. Escape! *Sacré!* I should catch him, were he to gain the top of Mont Perdu. I am as active as an Izard—let me alone. No, no, he'll not escape me. I have left him

with that monk to confess, I suppose. They are a pair of scoundrels together I do believe, for amongst these scum of the Faith there is nothing but rascality. I am watching them—and should he stir, I am quite ready to lodge the contents of this in his body—but you see I did not want *it*, to enable me to overcome the fellow—there it is you see, not even cocked!”

I passed over this ingratitude to the weapon which had served him so well though so silently, and I paid him some compliments on his courage and address. I heard the priest, in the mean time exhorting his disgraced follower to a course of more honourable conduct than he had lately pursued; and in a little time he made his appearance at the door. On seeing me, he seemed somewhat ashamed of his forgetfulness of the purpose of his coming to the hut.

“This, then, is the gentleman who is ill?” asked he, looking round apparently for the old woman.

“Yes, this is he, your reverence,” said the sergeant, in a bitter tone, “and have a care that you treat him well and fairly. Look to his fever, never mind his politics; feel his pulse, but don’t meddle with his conscience. Recollect it is medicine, and not religion, you have now to administer—and take a friend’s advice.

This last phrase was accompanied by an expressive gesture of tucking-up significancy—but the monk heeded it not. His rapt and enthusiastic look told that he was superior to paltry hints and ignoble apprehensions. He came forward calmly, and with a steady hand he felt my wrist, smiled assuringly, and nodded his head with that happy air of indifference, the good effect of which every skilful doctor knows full well.

“It is nothing,” said he, “I will attend to you in a few minutes; but first, Master Sergeant, let us despatch the affair of this unhappy culprit outside. What do you intend to do with him?”

“Eh, what do with him?” replied the sergeant,

completely thrown off his centre by the monk's commanding air and tone, and by the contemptuous indifference with which he had received the hectoring lecture, which the sergeant expected would have produced a very different effect. "Do with him?" repeated he, turning to me, "Egad, I don't exactly know—I had not begun to think of that yet."

"Perhaps then you will liberate him?" said the monk, calmly.

"Liberate him!" repeated the sergeant two or three times; but the echo was reverberated in tones of redoubled noise and emphasis; "What! let such a villain loose upon the world, to violate all the rights of men, women, and children—to make forcible entries, God knows where—to lay violent hands on the devil knows what——"

"Hush, hush your blaspheming voice!" exclaimed the monk, in a loud tone of authority, and raising his hand high above the little sergeant, who had started up, and stood as erect as a recruit under the measuring rod. "Commit not this outrage against heaven, joining the name of the Most High with that of the arch fiend. You declaim against an offence to man, while you are insulting your Maker!"

"*Sacre! Peste!* I had no notion of it," said the sergeant, evidently a little frightened at the accusation—"God knows"—

"Silence!" interrupted the monk, "God knows all things, and scorns your paltry appeal."

"Well, but, *Sacré Nom de——*"

"Dare not to finish the impious exclamation, nor brave the offended Deity!" uttered the monk, accompanying the thunder of his lungs with a lightning flash from his protuberant and electrical eyes.

"Was there ever the like of this?" asked my crest-fallen little friend, fairly beaten, upon the field of all his recent glory, by this domineering ecclesiastic; "Did you ever hear such a bullying bravo?—He



won't let me speak a word, either of question or answer. What must I do with him?"

"Listen to him quietly, and keep yourself cool," said I.

"Well, Sir, is your mind made up?" continued the priest, in an elevated voice, his looks reflecting the warmth of his heated feelings. "Are you decided yet? Will you give the man his freedom, or bring disgrace in his person on the sacred cause he serves?"

"Sacred cause, indeed!" murmured the sergeant.

"Pray keep silent one moment, and suffer me to speak a word," retorted the monk, in a tone of most authoritative *entreaty*. "Would you, I say, bring shame on the cause of religion and loyalty, because one of its followers, in mistaken zeal, trenched upon, although he did not even overstep, the strict line of the law.

"Why, as for that—"

"Do let me speak, I say. Remember that this man is a champion of the faith, filled with ardour for the cause of his God, his king, and his country. He knows the sacrilegious rebels are in arms, that Mina and his bandit horde are close upon the frontier. He burns to engage once more in the holy conflict of the faithful against the infidel, and to enable him to join his brethren in arms, he begged a loan of a weapon which he knew lay idly here."

"Begged a loan! The rascal!" uttered the sergeant, in a suppressed voice, which he only ventured to let slip through his teeth, as it were.

"And would you, for this offence against that strict rule which forbids us to carry arms upon your neutral ground, embroil your government and ours? Would you throw discredit on the righteous and the loyal, and give a triumph to the vile revolutionary band that lords it over Spain, and threatens France?"

"Tell me," said the sergeant, recovering a little his wonted jocular air, "tell me, my good Sir, what

penance do you inflict upon your lying lay brethren?" and he winked at me as he spoke.

"What do you dare to say?" thundered the monk, more loudly and violently than ever. "Would you, a Christian and a catholic, venture a ribald jest against the sacred mysteries of the church? And is it for you, while offending against her holy laws, to become the judge of a brother sinner? Would you—"

"Most pious, reverend, and venerable father," exclaimed the sergeant, with a mixture of sarcasm and *ennui*, "I am quite, perfectly, thoroughly convinced of my own errors, your worthy follower's virtues, and your infallibility. Take him away with you, upon condition that you leave me alone. Off with him, for the sake of heaven—I beg pardon, for *my* sake. There is his innocent little pocket-knife—cut his cords with it; yonder is the door, you know the way out; and I pray the saints and angels, that, once beyond its threshold, I may never see either of your pious and loyal faces again."

Quite exhausted by this tirade, the poor sergeant resumed his seat, twisting his mustachios, in evident mortification at having been thus bearded by the unwhiskered enthusiast, that gave so formidable an illustration of the church militant on earth.

I must leave the reader to picture the air of solemn delight with which the monk proceeded to the next room to liberate his worthy associate in the cause of legitimate tyranny; and the unsatisfied and harassed appearance of the sergeant, as he opened my window and made his exit, to regain his quarters beyond the ravine, the first having assured me he would return to me in a few minutes, and the latter promising to come and see me on the morrow.

When left quite to myself, I could have laughed heartily at the whimsical contrast of character which I had just witnessed; but the immediate return of the monk, having let his countryman loose, broke in upon my unsocial enjoyment. In his capacity of

"how is *she*? What is she doing? Does she want my assistance? Can I be of any use to her? Tell me all this now, like a good girl."

I made these inquiries in French, my *patois* not being sufficiently fluent to keep pace with my impatient curiosity.

"Remember what the pilgrim said to you at parting!" replied she, in her mountain diction. "Ask no questions, and take no heed of who comes or goes. Good night, Sir," and with these words she left the room, and quietly closed the door.

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## CHAPTER IX.

I COULD not for some time exactly comprehend the nature of the occult sentiment, under the influence of which I acquiesced so calmly in the orders of this girl, and which seemed to inspire me with a feeling actually bordering on respect and regard for beings of an order so very inferior as I considered those around me. Even the old grey cat seemed not quite excluded from its fair proportion of this growing weakness of my nature; and I once or twice rebuked Ranger for the unmannerly growling in which he indulged, as the green eyes of Grimalkin beamed intrusively at the half open door. But from well examining the bent of my thoughts, I became convinced that all this, which seemed so strange, was the natural result of association and sympathy. I could trace the emanation of every feeling to the main one of anxiety and interest in the situation and circumstances of the hidden female. My one casual glimpse of her person, my ignorance of her name, her objects in concealment, and the causes which led to it, combined to throw an air over the whole situation, to which I

cannot apply any other name than romantic, and tended to tinge my mind with a colouring that I must, I think, venture to call *chivalric*.

There are, certainly, moments in life, when, though we may wish, may labour, to be common-place in our sensations, and matter-of-fact in our conduct, we cannot succeed. A tide of feeling will rush upon us, too powerful for the dykes and mounds raised up by reason and philosophy. Our minds sink under the flood of weakness—if it be so—which flows warmly over, impregnating, and probably purifying, every thought. For these moments may surely be considered as our best, the true intervals of enjoyment, when we throw off the thralldom of social restrictions, and revel alone in a boundless realm of freedom and romance. It is in such times that the imagination fixes on some object, with an interest more than real—an exaggerated intensity, creating an atmosphere around, and giving to the meanest things within its influence, a character not properly their own; as the fragrance of the rose envelops, and might seem to breathe from, the veriest weed that crawls beneath it. And such was the state of feeling which procured for the Cagot family a degree of consideration on my part, that was due to my excited interest for the unknown female, to whose fate they seemed allied, and in whom all my thoughts were centred for the while.

I had slept too much during the day to be inclined for a further indulgence in that vital but, to me, most irksome loss of time and sacrifice of useful thought. Besides, as night approached I felt all my anxious curiosity increase, as if it were the most probable time for the arrival of the expected new comers, half promised by those cautious warnings of the pilgrim, which the girl's monition confirmed. I lay, therefore, wide awake, in spite of the strong recommendations and anxious wishes to the contrary on the part of my two nurses; for while the old one strove to put me to sleep by the lullaby of her advice, the young

one frequently listened at the door to ascertain its effects upon me. Finding this state of perturbed idleness insufferably wearisome, and that my tide of appetite was fairly on the flow, I at length declared loudly to the woman that I was determined to get up and partake of some supper in the next room. I gave no time for the expression of the discontent or alarm which I knew this announcement must excite; for I followed it up rapidly by a soothing speech, addressed to both the women, whom I had summoned to the door of my closet from the outer room, where they had been silently keeping watch—not for my wants alone, but, as I shrewdly conjectured, for the arrival looked for as well by them as by me.

“I am, you see, resolved to get up, my good women,” said I, “so there is no use in attempting to dissuade me. But have no alarm; I am neither inclined nor able to do any harm to any one, or to interrupt, in any way, the persons whom I know you expect. I shall sit by the fire, and promise you to neither look, nor listen for any information which you or the lady may be anxious to keep from me. Neither will I take any notice whatever of who comes, or who goes—your own words, my girl. But I cannot lie here any longer—I am cramped and wearied; and I must have something to eat, I don’t care what, for I am hungry enough to devour any thing. So now do you, my kind dame, prepare whatever you can give me; and you, my lass, go to the lady beyond, and tell her to have no apprehension, but, on the contrary, to rely upon my good wishes and anxiety to serve her if in my power.”

My discourse concluded, the women whispered a moment together, and the old one merely saying, “Very well, Sir, we will do as you like”—they went to fulfil the offices severally assigned to them.

Well pleased with myself for my exertion, and with them for their compliance, I was soon equipped, and seated by the fire in the outer room, which I

avoid calling the kitchen, only from the fear of degrading (in the reader's imagination) the principal apartment of the hut. The old mistress of the place began, with every appearance of good will, to prepare somewhat for the satisfaction of my palate. As animal food was not, in her estimation, adapted to my imperfectly recovered state, she sought to furnish me with a more innocent diet; and she accordingly brought forth from a little recess in the wall, a vessel of goat's milk, which lay, till wanted, in a stream of water, cold as the rock it sprang from, which flowed in perpetual course down a channel within the house. A portion of this pure milk, was placed in an earthen vessel to boil, and while it was giving notice of the coming fermentation, my hostess added a couple of wooden spoonsful of the flour of the large grained Asiatic wheat, called generally with us, I believe, Indian corn; but, in the south of France, *blé d'Espagne*. While the porridge thickened and simmered, a little *cassonade* (brown sugar) was sprinkled over, a bit of cinnamon flung in, and a tea spoonful of orange flower water (brought from the secret chamber) added by the girl—and finally a brown soup-plate full of the whole composition was placed before me, forming, as the old woman vivaciously exclaimed, “a mess of *cruchade*, for which any poor Cagot might fairly sell his birth-right.” - I really could not help thinking so too, as I swallowed this excellent preparation, considering that the common heritage of a Cagot is degradation and distress, less palatable than even the meanest preparation of the *cruchades* as it is generally eaten, simply with salt, and without any of the delicate appliances which flavoured mine. A couple of eggs poached (my own share of the cookery:) and a salad, of wild chicory, onions, and beet-root, completed my supper—which was also, be it remembered, my breakfast and dinner; and I began to yawn and stretch out my legs and arms, in the true after-enjoyment of a simple and hearty meal, when all the

extended thews and sinews of body and limbs were suddenly contracted and braced up, by the sound of rapid and loud whisperings in the secret chamber.

I looked around me. The old woman sat at one corner of the fire-place—the cat at the other—both eying me with feline scrutiny. The girl had disappeared; and I was satisfied that the whispered interchange of sounds within was between her and the mysterious female. While the girl had sat near me a few minutes before, muffled up and mute, I could not help from time to time drawing comparisons in my own mind, between her sluggish gesture and position, and the graceful figure I had seen in the same place the preceding night, its speaking attitude and eloquent contour, as the pilgrim recited his stirring communication. This mental contrast was no infringement of the compact made with the women of the hut; and as long as I abstained from asking or seeking information on the secret object of my curiosity, I felt free to cogitate as much as I thought proper. But all my occupation in that way was put an end to by the whispering within—and all my scrupulous forbearance in such cases was put in peril by the increasing loudness in which one of the voices indulged.

“Good Heavens! can she be scolding?” thought I. “Is she, after all, concealed here for some intrigue of passion, not of politics—some violent termagant, fallen foul at last of her poor stupid Cagot confidante?—and who knows that she may not have been making free with the brandy bottle!”

This climax of horrible conjecture thrilled through every fibre of my enthusiasm, and I started up to take refuge in my bed from such fancies, and the still increasing sounds which fed them. The old woman saw and seemed to approve my intention; and I was hurrying off, when a totally new turn was given to my feelings, by the conviction that one or two words which struck upon my ear, proceeded from the voice

of a man. The sight of a foot-print was not more startling to Crusoe in his desert island than was this sound to me—but from a different cause, for my sensations were purely those of pleasure. I shook off at once the load of mortifying misgivings which had begun to oppress me; and, satisfied that my secret heroine was better employed than I had for a moment fancied her, I only hastened my movements to bed, where I was less likely to be an interruption to what was going on, or to acquire any unfair knowledge of it.

As I hurried into bed, a thousand different notions rushed upon me. The first was, that it must have been the pilgrim, who was come back to the hut; but I abandoned that, from the conviction, that he would not have avoided seeing me in the first instance, nor have stolen in by a back door or window, as this new visiter must have done. I next thought that it might be some one of the Spanish patriots—Perhaps Mina himself—come to this rendezvous to meet his French partisans, for strong notions existed at the time, that the victorious chief would push forward his successes, and even attempt an invasion of France. But I abandoned this fancy, as soon as formed—for it appeared too extravagant a risk. My conjectures were all, however, much interrupted, and my efforts to keep in ignorance of the strange person thwarted, by the seemingly careless and joyous tone with which he loudly talked, as if despising concealment.

My door was of that loose construction, common to such lowly habitations as the one which I occupied. It was impossible to close it, so as to shut out even the imperfect sounds of voices in the other part of the house, and my attempts at humming a tune, talking to Ranger, and haranging the old woman, were not sufficient to keep me from an occasional involuntary acquirement of information as to my fellow occupants of the Cagot's hut. The voice of the stranger was manly but delicate—the tone high but not bois-



terous—the accent good, and the pronunciation pure Parisian—a very agreeable contrast to the rude *patois* of the Cagot family, the provincial twang of the pilgrim, and the sergeant's Gascon drawl. I was satisfied, at any rate, that though ignorant of the *who?* as to the stranger's identity, I might answer the *what?* by saying “a gentleman;” and as to the *why?* and the *wherefore?* of his present visit, I left their solution to time and his own good pleasure. There was also something in the varied modulations of his voice that convinced me he was a young man; and I had made up my mind, even without other proofs of tenderness, that he was a lover. I set him down for my heroine's hero and mine, and though sometimes unlucky in these allotments of character, I was this time, at least, not wrong.

The first words I heard in a connected phrase clearly related to myself, and they were probably meant to meet my ear distinctly, as the door of the secret room evidently lay a little open.

“Yes, yes, my Malvide, you may safely rely on his being no enemy of yours or mine. His aiding to seize that ruffian is sufficient proof—you are justified in your confidence—so let us not dream of dangers, but indulge in hope and joy.”

“Oh, while I have you with me I can imagine nothing evil;” murmured a half suppressed voice; and both one and the other blended in a confused and tender interchange of sounds, which no doubt spoke volumes to the lovers, but told me nothing. Their garrulous babbling went on with great animation for full an hour, a broken sentence reaching me at intervals, in my own despite, but betraying nothing, for I carefully avoided the context. But it was clear to me that the lovers were placed in some difficulty and peril more than common, although it has been seen that they seemed agreed to scout all notions of danger.

Finding it impossible to sleep, I had taken from my knapsack what I may justly call my common-

place-book, for it consisted of scraps of all kinds, in prose and rhyme, rough sketches in pencil, and memoranda of expenses; and I was beguiling the time by noting down, as was my custom, some hints for future expansion; when I heard the chords of the guitar I had before observed, swept with a masterly and animating touch, which gave a tone and character to that instrument, that I had only from time to time heard equalled by some Spanish professors, but never knew approached by a performer of any other nation than theirs.

After several bold and varied preludes and voluntaries, the young stranger, for it was plainly the touch of a manly hand, played with considerable effect some popular Spanish airs, among others, "Riego's March," that most stirring composition, connecting the name of one of Spain's purest patriots, with the splendid actions of what at that time, falsely appeared to be the Spanish *nation*.

While the performer played, my heroine (or rather let me call her Malvide, to prove the better acquaintance of myself and my readers with her,) Malvide could not suppress the frequent expression of her delight; and when he struck the final chord of the march he had three or four times repeated, she said something, with an air of entreaty, to which he replied,

"To be sure, to be sure, though my voice has been latterly in a ruder kind of practice."

A new symphony sounded softly from the strings, and a voice of manly melody sung an air, which was to me quite new, though bearing all the character of those Seguidillas, of Moorish origin, which are so peculiar to Spain, and which unite such a harmony of plaintive and simple tenderness.

Malvide seemed as much pleased as I was with this new specimen of her lover's talent, for she honoured it with full half a dozen encores; and as I could not then resist attempting to score it down in my book, I hope I may be excused transplanting it into the one I

am now writing, even should it (which I do not believe) have already found its way into print in England.\*

The words are a sort of imitation of those which I caught imperfectly from the performer; or rather a paraphrase of the ideas, for I could not catch their expression connectedly.

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## CHAPTER X.

WHILE I was still occupied in noting down the song, for some time after the voice and instrument had ceased, my imperfect knowledge of music not keeping pace with the performer's fine execution, I was roused from my task by a gentle knock at the door, which rather startled me, as the old woman always bustled in very unceremoniously. The notion that it might be the stranger, glanced across my mind. "Give yourself the trouble to come in," said I, in the courteous but overstrained parlance of the country, and I sat bolt upright in my bed, to receive my visitor with all due honour; but down I sank again very quickly, turning my face to the wall, and throwing up my shoulder as a protection, when I caught a glimpse of the girl of the house, putting her hooded head into the room.

"Are you awake, Sir?" asked she, and I thought a titter was mixed with the question.

"No," answered I, sulkily, rather offended at the

\* I have observed that the very air I here intended to have given to my readers, has found its way into one of the late numbers of the "National Melodies," with words which have put me so much out of conceit with my own imitation of the original Spanish ones, that prudence, as well as justice, tells me to omit the song altogether.

impertinence, without considering that my rapid retreat beneath the bed-clothes, was visible enough.

"I am sorry for it," replied she, almost laughing fairly out, "for there is a gentleman in the house who wished much to pay his respects to you."

The *naïveté* of the girl's tone, and the quaint *patois* idiom, were of themselves sufficient to remove my ill humour; but the announcement of the visit I had half anticipated consummated the return of my composure, and I broke cover, as I may call it, still more rapidly than I had sought refuge.

"Show him in by all means—he does me infinite honour—I am broad awake, and shall be enchanted to see him," exclaimed I, in a breath, bouncing out of bed. The girl took flight precipitately, and I commenced dressing; but before I had made much progress, a bolder knock at the door announced my visitor, and he entered simultaneously with my movement to admit him.

The moment I saw his face I knew it for one that had somewhere before been familiar to me; more I did not recollect. It was evident that the recognition was reciprocal, and he soon proved that his memory possessed more retail qualities than mine, which only had the power of wholesale recollection.

"This is indeed, Sir," said the stranger, putting forth his hand, "an unexpected and may to me prove a fortunate meeting. I little thought, when I last had the pleasure of seeing you with our friend Vinaroz, that our next rencontre should be in these wild scenes."

I shook with much cordiality the proffered hand; for the mention of my friend at once brought to mind that I really had met this young man more than once, a few months before, at his hospitable mansion, near Paris; where was frequently united all that was distinguished and respectable among Vinaroz's countrymen, (for he was a Spaniard,) with much of other nations, that was talented and liberal—he himself was

both. Among the many Frenchmen of reputation I was there in the habit of mixing with, several were unknown to me by name, and such was the ease with the stranger. His frankness soon put an end to my fears that I had before known his name and now forgot it; for he continued to speak, after my short reply to his salutation.

"Although we have never been formally introduced, the house in which we have before now associated, is a guarantee to both that we may freely trust in each other; but the circumstances that have thrown us together would have justified the confidence I meant to give you, even when I supposed that I had never seen you before."

I did not perhaps quite agree with this generous opinion; but as I had no confidence to give and all to receive, I did not check his enthusiasm—certain that I could not be betrayed, and that he *should* not. I therefore said, for I saw that he waited for my reply,

"Depend upon it, you are safe in whatever you may say to me. I pledge my honour not to abuse your good opinion, and I shall be happy to be of service to you;—but I must in candour premise that I am pretty sure I know a good deal of your present purposes." He stared wide at this. "That is," continued I, "as far as they are connected with your visit here, no more. For instance, I know there is a lady concealed in the house, whom you are come to visit, and with whom you have passed the last two hours—but whatever your connexion may be I know not, and I have no wish to pry into so delicate a secret."

He pressed my hand with warmth in his, and said, "You are right so far; I freely confess it. My visit here was to the lovely person whose concealment you have discovered. But I cannot tell you more at present: you know but half the fact; nor can I confide all just now, for reasons arising solely from her feelings—mine would prompt me to tell every thing, for

I hate a half confidence, and your conduct in this house entitles you to ours most fully."

"Pray do not go further—" said I; "I am better pleased to know only what I do—if at any future time, when you know me better, you and your fair friend may think well of giving me your entire confidence, my self-esteem will be more gratified than would be my curiosity in possessing it now."

"Well, well, then," said he, "since you consent to our reserve; and make yourself a party to it, you must not reproach me hereafter if you find that it has been greater than you approve."

"I shall freely acquit you of every thing unfair or unhandsome."

"Good! the time is fast approaching, then—perhaps to-morrow—when I may require your aid in furthering my happiness and securing her safety. Things are in a distracted state just here—events come on fast and hotly—a crisis is at hand—and my fate is in the balance."

This was spoken with that air which accompanies the utterance of things that the speaker forgets are known only to himself—when the mind is abroad, looking widely into "coming events," and enveloped, as it were, in the shadows which they cast before them. The stranger seemed for a moment possessed with that unconsciousness, the frequent distinction of high minds and ardent spirits. He paused for a few minutes, and he looked as if he held communion with mighty aspirations.

I marked him as he stood. He was scarcely above the middle height, but he did just pass it. He was dark complexioned, and his profusion of black hair, whiskers, and mustachios, would have given, perhaps, an air of fierceness to his countenance, had it not been softened by a warm glow upon his cheek, and a brilliancy of eye quite foreign to aught of violence. His muscular form assorted well with the half military undress, a grey frock coat and vest, black handker-

chief, and pantaloons of dark green, edged with let. He wore short boots which showed no rough travelling, and inside his frock I perceived black belt, but it had no weapon then.

He soon recovered from the fit of abstraction which had absorbed him, and he accepted my offer of the only chair which the room contained, my sketch and lamp being removed from it to the little table which sat down on the bedside, and he spoke:

"I had almost forgotten you, or rather I forgot *myself* in the vast field of thought which suddenly before me; but I must come back to my personal considerations—yet that notion is not so narrow as to embrace myself alone. No, there is no other person combined with every feeling of mine more than myself, whose safety and well-being is dearer—much dearer than mine—need I point to any other person more clearly?"

"No, no," said I, "I want no further clue to the labyrinth of your sensations."

"'Tis well—you understand me—and I am satisfied. Every hour that passes is pregnant with things that are to us of infinite importance. The struggle now going on, between reason and faith on the one hand, and bigotry and despotism on the other, involves us in its career, so intimately and deeply, that our fate is in suspense till that contest is decided. At present all looks well. The good cause triumphs—the really righteous cause—the virtue and justice in all their grandest elements, against the gross abuses which corrupt nature and degrade mankind.—All may continue—but reverses may be at hand, and the threatening aspect of this frontier army, gives cause for apprehension. Promptness and energy may be required to take measures which I and the object of my care must take! Aid may be necessary to secure her, and *that* I may find alone from some stranger. I would not compromise you in any way, but I

hesitate to ask you to hold yourself ready for a day or two, should your time and your health permit, to assist in any step which may become expedient, to serve the lady in question, and which she herself may point out."

"I pledge myself to do so," answered I, unhesitatingly.

"You relieve my mind, then," replied he, "from the only fear that could oppress it, in this season of triumph and in this brief and stolen visit of love and happiness. One honourable man, from whom she may obtain the protection I may be unable to afford, was alone required—and all that has passed since your arrival here forbids me to doubt that I have found such a one in you."

I bowed my acknowledgment of the compliment, and he shook my hand firmly as he went on.

"Now, then, one concluding entreaty, and pray do not take it ill. It is, that you will not seek to discover more of my beloved one's secret than she has already permitted me to divulge—that you will not attempt to see her, nor interfere with her in any way, till my return, or a letter from me may authorize your full acquaintance—but that you will continue the course of conduct, while you are here, which has already gained you so much esteem and gratitude."

"I freely promise all that you demand," was my reply.

"I have nothing more to require," said he. "And now you will excuse my saying, adieu. Time is precious, and it presses fast. Every moment passed away from my Malvide, is, to my feelings, so much lost. You will not take this ill, but make allowances still greater than I can ask for. Farewell, at least for a while. Before the dawn I must be away from hence. This neighbourhood is alive with dangers—but before I set out I may again disturb you, to trespass on you with my parting acknowledgments, and



final request for the protection of her who is so dear to me."

After the interchange of a few words, he quitted the room; and I had just laid myself upon the bed when he returned.

"There is one point more," said he, "on which I did not think it necessary to touch; but where political opinions are in doubt, one should not, in these times, take any thing *for granted*. I might safely make an exception, I think, with regard to you; but you cannot be offended at my taking the better course, and ascertaining whether we feel alike on the momentous question which now agitates the world."

I was about to reply, but he continued—

"Permit me one observation. From the society in which I have been in the habit of meeting you I am quite sure you are on the side of all that is liberal in Europe; but I remember to have heard you on one occasion express yourself strongly against some of the measures of the French Revolution, and you know how much the present one of Naples, Piedmont, and Spain, are identified with that."

"So much the worse," interrupted I, for he was inclined to continue—"So much the worse for it and them; as its atrocities are thus brought in full contrast with their splendid moderation, at once blasting it by comparison, and degrading *them* by contact. Excuse me," said I, for he was about to speak, "if I entreat you not to let us commence a political discussion. Your time must not be wasted, nor our good understanding endangered. I see to what your inquiries point. You fear that, should we differ in opinion, my conduct towards the interesting object of your solicitude might be affected?"

He nodded assent.

"Make your mind easy on that head. Were I the most servile of the *Serviles* in my political creed, my private conduct would not be changed—and were yours the odious character that I have supposed pos-

sible for myself, I would still in this manner act towards you faithfully and cordially. But be quite convinced that in all that is essential we think alike. You love liberty, and hate tyranny—so do I. You wish for triumph, great and lasting, to the liberal cause in Spain—my wishes and hopes are yours. And further let me add, that had I lived at the birthday of the French Revolution, I should have hailed it with the same enthusiasm with which I glorify the dawn that even now breaks over Spain;—but should *this*, in its progress, sink into the excesses which have eternized the infamy of *that*, I would execrate the one as I do the other. My ardent prayer is, that such may be the result; and indeed the example of the past is the best guarantee for that which is to come. Let Spain march on in all the magnificence of her present progress; and should even overwhelming force throw her back again into the depths of darkness and disgrace, better lie so till the fitting hour of regeneration arrives, than gain a freedom defiled by crimes, whose brand sinks deeper than that of slavery itself,—a freedom which must disappear in rapid and loathsome extinction, as the gleams of putrescency expire in the rottenness by which they are engendered.

Such, or nearly such, were the words, and certainly it was the tenor, of the reply which I made to my unknown catechist. It is not necessary to record his rejoinder, for it did not bear in any way on the course of the events in which we were now parties. He almost immediately left me; and I soon heard him in deep converse with her who was, for the time being at least, his world.

## CHAPTER XI.

ONCE more left to myself, my thoughts naturally reverted to the subject of this last interview. I entered on a train of reflection on the singular chances which had thus again brought into contact two men, not known to each other, even by name, yet between whom the very germ of a casual acquaintance, seemed at once to ripen into friendship; for I had no reason to doubt the stranger's sentiments towards me, and I could answer for the sincerity of those which he had excited. And thus, perhaps, it is that the best and most solid attachments of life are, in their very formation, cemented and confirmed, by some secret sympathy which defies our research, and our ignorance of which makes us marvel at our own facility, and that of the object who so readily admits and returns our regard. And probably the philosophy of *practice* teaches that thus our friendships *should* be formed—by impulse, not on calculation—not bartering the best emotions of the heart for a speculative return—not *seeking* objects for our sympathy—nor *choosing* them for qualities that really place them out of its range; but following the feeling that fixes our friendships as if by predestined doom—and letting our hearts imbibe the generous flow, like plants that instinctively open to the dew-shower which fills them with fruitfulness and bloom.

Let those who have gone out into the wide field of life on such a search as I have supposed, examine the result of the selections they may have made. Let them recollect the checks which have withered their budding hopes—the disappointments which have chilled their cultured expectations:—and then they will perhaps repose with fresh delight upon the few yet

invaluable friendships which have sprung from chance meetings, and often forced their way through all the obstacles of opposing tastes, opinions, and pursuits. But I must not proceed so illogically as to anticipate the corollary of my argument, while the premises are yet unproved. Rather let me return to the subject of my story, and show how my connexion with its hero led to the digression I have too long indulged in.

I had, as my readers will allow, no small cause to be pleased with my own sagacity, in having conjectured the hut to be the haunt of some of the persons connected with the political intrigues known at that time to be in progress. This stranger had all but avowed himself to be involved in some such, and I did not hesitate in looking on him as a delegate from the discontented French, and the medium of communication between them, and the patriots of Spain. So far I was satisfied as to his political character; but my own opinions on public matters in no way influenced or interfered with the sentiments which led me to regard my new acquaintance as no common one. Accordance, or dissent, on points of this kind, happily interfere but seldom with individual attachments; for true liberality can draw the line between opinions and feelings, and thus separate the public from the private man.

But I was infinitely more at a loss when I attempted to account to myself for the embarrassment in which my new friend and his fair companion were involved. I hazarded several conjectures on the subject, which were all at variance with each other, and none satisfactory in itself; and I put an end to the fruitless intricacy of this guess-work, by a fervent prayer that, maid, wife, or widow, my heroine might get safely through her perils, and prove worthy of the guardianship that watched her.

All this while the night was passing over—rapidly

enough, even for me, but how much faster for the couple with whom the hours were but as moments, yet every moment a long age of bliss—who neither counted the sands in the glass of Time, nor heard the flapping of his wings! The lovers were better employed. They were making the most of the brief interval snatched from their difficulties, be they what they might; and I fancied the breaks in their murmured conversation to be filled up by those looks and sighs which speak a language more expressive, and more eloquent, than that of words.

The moment of separation at length arrived; it was within an hour of dawn, and the stranger left his mistress' chamber, and came to wish me a hasty farewell. Very few words passed between us. He was evidently affected by the parting which had just taken place—he had, like all lovers in like circumstances, out-staid his time—and he had little to say to me but the repetition of his hopes for my assistance, should it be required, and a renewed entreaty, that until I saw or heard from him I would not, in any circumstances, approach the secret chamber, nor interfere with its mysterious and interesting occupant.

I said just enough to satisfy, but not detain him. My lamp, which had been calculated for the actual duration of darkness, was growing rapidly dim, and promised not to outshine the stars. Its murky beam allowed just light enough to give my visiter a clear passage from my room into the one outside, and I saw him pause a moment at the opposite door, as if he gave so much breathing time to the firmness which he summoned to support his final parting. But a counter current was at hand to oppose the tide of resolution which he expected to set in. As he stopped thus for a while, with one hand pressed against his head, the other on his heart, the door opened, and the female whom I had seen the night before, less dimly even then than now, came gently from the

room, and clasped his manly figure in her arms. The embrace was mutually firm and fervent. The sobs of the female were answered by soothing tones from her lover, and after a time she retired into the room again, he closing the door, and then girding a sword around him, and fixing a brace of pistols in his belt; he next flung a short cloak across his shoulders, placed a military looking travelling cap on his head, and crossing towards the fire-place was lost to my sight; and I soon heard the old woman rise from her bed and bolt the door, as this adventurous lover bent his way into the dreary paths, which were to lead to purposes and pursuits to me a mystery.

I lay down again, but scarcely expecting to sleep. Fatigued, however, by my previous indisposition and want of rest, I soon fell into a doze, from which I was awoke by the almost suffocating fumes of my expiring lamp, which I had forgot to extinguish, and which was now dying, in any odour but that of sweetness or sanctity. I arose hastily, took down the piece of board, which acted the part of a shutter to my window, opened the casement, and put the lamp outside. It was not yet dawn; the air was not cold, for a mild night had succeeded to the bad and boisterous weather of the few preceding days. I felt relieved by the stream of freshness which seemed to flow into my confined and heated closet; and I no sooner returned to my lying position, than the influence of this new atmosphere procured me the sleep which nature had before sought for in vain.

I slept as if I were never to awake again; an utter torpor seemed to have seized on me. I neither stirred from one posture, nor did a dream ripple the surface of repose, in which my spirit seemed to be steeped. I awoke, however, but it was as if by force. I felt my mind struggling to get free from the sloth which clogged it, and the sense of hearing was the natural conductor through which my brain was acted on. As I

gradually came into consciousness; it seemed as if enchantment surrounded me, and held me in its spell. A strain of wild and broken music, came now and then upon the breeze, distant at first, but repeated in louder strains, then dying away in lengthened vibrations, and again returning in short and varied sounds.

I sat up in my bed, and looked out of the open window. The mists had cleared away from over the ravine, and the rocky mountains at the other side, seemed to have approached the cottage by full one-half their apparent distance the preceding day. The little hovel which served for a barrack to Sergeant Passepartout and his detachment, stood out in a bolder and nearer relief, and every object displayed the effect of the changeful atmosphere of this elevated region. I arose in momentary doubt of all that I saw and heard, for it seemed as if fancy was playing one of its deceptive freaks, and that I still slept. But sight and hearing repeated their evidences of reality. As I stretched out of my window and looked abroad, all the desolate features of the scene appeared in only a closer monotony; and I heard in louder sounds the repetition of the music, which I now knew to be bugle blasts, sent back in mimic melody from the hills.

I at first supposed them to proceed from the station, occupied by my friend the sergeant, but I soon ascertained them to come from another and more distant quarter; and I distinctly saw Passepartout and his ten men, without any instrument of martial music, drawn up as if on parade, with all their arms and accoutrements in full marching order. I hastily threw on the remainder of my dress, and passed by the window out into the garden, from the farther extremity of which, a clear view was to be obtained, not only of the ravine, but of all the surrounding space. To my great surprise, I distinguished upon all the little paths leading down the hills in the direction of Ge-

dro, a number of men scattered in small groups or coming singly along. These I at once discovered to be Spaniards, and a little while confirmed my supposition that they formed a portion of the army of the Faith, having united their straggling bands, and being about to re-enter Spain, by the unfrequented, and as it appeared, unguarded pass which lay before me.

There was infinite variety and animation in the scene I gazed on. The sun shone out brightly on the peaks, and the snow glistened in his rays. Lower down, the dark shadows of the rocks, or patches of pine wood, contrasted with the brightness above; and, mixed in the sunshine and the shade, were the figures of the Spaniards, of whom I counted above a hundred, in their ragged yet romantic costume, all carrying muskets, pikes, or other weapons. Two or three bugles sounded at intervals, calling in the stragglers to the grand point of reunion, and frequently new objects were seen peering forth from the scanty covers of copse or furze, through which they forced a way, to fall in with the more beaten track.

A party had already halted at the opening of the gorge, in which the hut was situate, and just where the noisy waterfall deposited its frothy waves in a basin, from which they flowed in limpid and silent streams into the valley. That seemed to be the rallying point for the assembling Spaniards, and it had all the air of head quarters to these strolling bands. Several mules were standing, heavily laden with baskets and bales of different dimensions; three or four tents were already pitched, and others were about to be constructed. These were all of rude materials, blankets, carpets and the like; and they formed a clumsy and mis-shapen parody upon a military encampment. A number of monks, women and children, sat or lay upon the ground, some apparently asleep, others eating, drinking, or occupying themselves about their scanty baggage.



On a rocky elevation about three or four hundred yards in advance of this encampment, but not so far from me, a group caught my attention. It consisted of six or seven persons, in better and more completely military attire than the rest, who surrounded and seemed earnestly to listen to the observations of one who differed from them all in costume, and whose height also made him remarkable. This I ascertained to be Father Munoz, in the full habiliments of his order, who had, it appeared, succeeded in his plans for rallying some of his followers, and was now on the point of executing his daring and desperate project of hostilely recrossing the frontier. Much as I differed from this monk, in principles and opinions, I could not look without interest, upon so striking a specimen of fanatic fervour, bravery, and benevolence—a strange combination of powerful feelings, with high intellect; and forming a character, the most extraordinary with which I had ever come in contact.

The situation in which I now observed him, presented an aspect of peculiar power and variety. He evidently filled the part of military chief, and his functions seemed as various as they were unusual with his age and profession. He appeared to unite in himself all the duties of commander with those of adjutant and quarter-master general combined. At one time he reconnoitred with his spy-glass the distant heights, then he looked towards the baggage, and instantly one of the surrounding group hastened to the spot, where the bustle announced some movement, in obedience to the orders issued. Again he pointed towards particular points, leading to the pass through which his advance was to be attempted, and detachments of his little force quickly moved forward, under the direction of some one from the party composing his personal staff. All this seemed executed by an active yet composed attention on his part, and a ready obedience in those who served him.

orders, indicative of a share of discipline that must have proceeded alone from the respect in which this holy chieftain was held.

A strong contrast to his zealous and ardent measures was presented in the lazy and luxurious air of his brother monks, who were reclined in indolent enjoyment, if it could be called so, partaking every thing but their trouble with the worn out and wretched women of the party; or some riding up to the rendezvous, while the females, more delicate, but not so weak, plodded on beside their mules, burdened and bowed down, by their young children, or large packages of clothes or provender.

Father Munoz having made all his preparatory arrangements for his enterprize, with an apparent combination of boldness and caution, placed his advanced parties at their posts, and assigned to the whole their several stations and order of march; and next, to my great surprise and no little satisfaction, he quitted his party, and alone took the path which led up to the hut. I could not doubt his visit being meant for me, and I was grateful for this anticipated recollection of his patient, while I admired the good feeling that could, at a moment of such importance to himself and his devoted band, prompt a step which could alone, as I thought, have arisen from a pure sense of duty; and even when I found in a little time that other motives were mixed with that, it did not lessen my esteem.

The movement most natural to these feelings was to go forward to meet him, and I proceeded to put it into execution. I was about to return to my room, by the way I had come out, namely through the window, no door being visible to me, at the rear of the house. But in looking towards the window, which belonged to the secret chamber, with a punctilious avoidance of a scrutiny that might see through it, I was struck by observing an object, which confirmed

my whole mass of former suspicion and conjecture. This was no other than a small machine, evidently telegraphic, of a construction which I did not understand, but which was garnished with balls and ribbons of different colours, and was actually in busy motion, worked by hidden hands, and strings from the window, which my scrupulous regard to my promise, prevented my more closely examining. This political or amorous instrument, for the communication of facts or feelings, was quite close to the hut, but so low as not to overtop it, and so slender and small in all its proportions, as to be invisible from a very short distance, without the aid of a telescope—and such I had no doubt was steadily fixed upon it that moment, and perhaps upon *me* as well, thought I. I am not quite sure, whether or not this last notion had its effect in hastening my retreat, but I very quickly passed into my bed room, and through it into the kitchen. I was somewhat surprised to see it quite tenantless. There was no sign of any member of the family except the cat, which held its silent watch in the chimney corner, beside the unexpired embers of the night, and took no notice of my and Ranger's intrusion beyond the bristling line upon its back, which marked its rising choler—and which, if borne by many a more reasoning, but not less irrational being, would be in a state of perpetual elevation. Had it not been for the silent testimony of the little telegraph, I should have believed myself sole occupant of the hut, but although the Cagot proprietors had disappeared, I felt too anxious for the interests of *her* whom I believed to remain, to allow of my running any risk to her prejudice, by the admission of Father Munoz. I therefore quitted the house, and walked down the path by which he was rapidly ascending.

I saluted him cordially, but with respect, taking off my hat, and addressing a few words of welcome, and thanks for the good advice, which had been so effec-

tual in my recovery. He returned my salutation, as if his mind was fixed on other matters; and when he came close to me, he mechanically stretched out his hand, not to shake mine, but to feel my pulse. While his right hand was thus employed, his left held up his long sabre in its brass sheath, and also a crucifix, fixed to a wooden handle of about four or five feet long. A brace of huge horse pistols and a spy-glass were in his belt, which was also filled with rolls of paper stuck thickly into it. His cassock was tucked up all round, as high as his knees, and his long sinewy legs were thus displayed naked, but for the straps of his *sparfilles*—and this, with the other parts of his dress before described, completed the marching and fighting costume of this singular chieftain.

When he had satisfied himself that my pulse was right, that is, supposing that he really thought about it at all, he dropped my hand abruptly, and said to me, looking all the while far above me, and into the distant peaks of the mountains, as I thought,

“Sir, I am glad you are well. I was desirous to see you, and have my hopes confirmed, as they now are. Nothing more is necessary, but to follow nature and trust in Heaven. And now let me fairly own to you that other motives besides my good wishes for you, urged my visit to this hut. In the first place, you have, I know, a gun, useless for awhile to you, but which, in other hands just now, might be of infinite assistance to the great cause of religion and loyalty, which I am in the act of serving. You understand me;”—continued he, pointing towards his encampment—“Will you lend me this valuable weapon, taking my good faith as security for its safe return, as soon as I have repassed our frontier line, and chastised the rebel bands that would interrupt my progress?”

“My good father and very worthy physician,”

answered I, "as your request is made with candour, I must refuse it without reserve. In the first place—opposed as I am to your attempt, however I may esteem your motives; anxious for your failure though I personally regard you; wishing well to your enemies, while they are individually unknown to me—I cannot voluntarily contribute, in ever so trifling a degree to your triumph and their defeat. In the next place——"

"Enough, enough," interrupted he, in his lofty tone, and on the same principle I suppose which induced Henry IV. of France to pass over the last eighteen reasons out of nineteen of the mayor of a town, who did not salute his approach with a discharge of artillery; the *first* being that he had no cannon. "Enough; I admire your frankness, and honour the fair dealing which marks your refusal: nor would I accept of your gun if your compliance had revolted your conscience."

"And besides," said I, wishing to soften the absolute rigour of my denial, "you have, it seems, no enemy to contend with, and your followers appear all well armed."

"Why," answered he calmly, "my followers are armed, but not *well*. They have their weapons returned to them from the neighbouring French dépôt; but let that pass. And so you think my enterprize is without difficulty, and that I shall not be opposed? Look yonder!"

With these words he arranged his spy-glass, gave it into my hand, and pointed to a distant part of the mountains that lay dark in the shade of Mont Perdu, which towered above all the others. I had no sooner placed the glass to my eye, and levelled it in the direction he designed, than to my utter astonishment I discovered the face of the particular hill I looked at alive with men. My heart throbbed with pleasure, for I knew them at once to be the constitutional force of Spain.

Some sudden exclamation escaped me, and the monk observed,

"You see them, then?"

"I do, indeed," answered I; "and I advise you, my good father, to retrace your steps into the safe shelter of France, nor venture beyond the bounds that will deliver you to the vengeance of yonder heroes."

"Their vengeance! seek shelter!" cried he with energy: "Rather let me hurry on to chastise the rebel crew, and drive them before this consecrated blade, which the most reverend and holy Francis Xavier \* himself has blessed and bound around me."

With these words he drew out his blade, a real "toledo," of prodigious length, and of apparent corresponding sharpness of point and edge. He swung this formidable weapon over his head, held his crucifix like a standard, high in his other hand, and with his eye staring forward towards the scene of approaching action, he stood a moment in this menacing, and I may say, appalling attitude. But I had not the least alarm. Had the ruffian Sanchez been so near, I dare say I should have felt very differently.

The monk recovered from his warlike reverie in a few minutes, and putting up his blade, he asked me if the family of the hut were all from home?

"The *family* are all, I do believe," answered I.

"Either you are mistaken," said he, "or some one besides the family is in the house this moment, I think."

As he said this, he looked through his glass towards the mountain, I made no immediate reply, but I began to feel seriously uneasy for the person whom I tolerably well *knew* to be in the house.

"Look once more," said he, "and steadily, at

\* The prelate alluded to was, I suppose, Francis Xavier Mier y Campillo, Bishop of Almeida, and Inquisitor General.

yonder point of rocky appearance, just under that large long patch of snow."

I pointed the glass as desired, and in a very little my eye rested on a machine of precisely the same telegraphic appearance as that which was so near us. It appeared busily worked by the figure of a man, who stood close to it. I started with surprise.

"You are astonished?" said Father Munoz; "and I am convinced that those signals communicate with the Cagot's hut."

"Why should you think so?" asked I, in a manner that must have looked very like complicity on my part.

"In the first place," replied he, "because I can nowhere else discover or indeed imagine a return of this kind of communication; and in the second, because I know that the family are in actual understanding with yonder odious enemy. What! you are incredulous again? Take the glass once more, and look firmly on that little rugged path, leading up from that gorge to the left, and tell me if you recognize an acquaintance."

Again I put this magic glass to my eye, and although expecting some new wonder, I was indeed surprised to mark the bent yet active form of the old Cagot woman, trudging up the path, in direct course for the Liberal army, not far out of her reach.

"Your glass has indeed taught me something new, for all these matters were to me most perfect secrets," said I.

"I believe it," replied he; "and you will not be now surprised if I should wish to examine that hut."

"Not surprised at your wish, but most unwilling that you should put it into force. I consider myself in some measure the guardian of the house, and all it contains, however unknown to me. I cannot *consent* to have it examined, but I cannot prevent your entering it by force."

"By force!" exclaimed Father Munoz, "No, not

even if I had the right. But we are on French ground, and the right is not mine; so, be satisfied as to the safety of all that is there, whether friends of yours, or our foes. And now I must hasten to my duty, strong in confidence, and confident in faith. Adieu, Sir; and that you may know fully the principles which are my impulse and my support, read this."

He then gave me from his belt a printed paper; and while I read as follows, he wended his way down the path which led him to his post.

*"Proclamation.*

**"SOLDIERS AND CHILDREN IN JESUS CHRIST.**

"By the aid of the Lord, you are about to gain a glory equal to that which your forefathers acquired over the impious Moors. The bells of the temple of God have called forth your valour and your love for our holy religion. Ye have taken up arms, and Heaven will favour and forward your undertakings. Ye are about to begin your glorious task of exterminating the troops of the line, militia, and constitutionalists. Continue firm and zealous in your object, and you are more than a match for these perverse and odious wretches. You will imitate your ancestors, who raised the cross on the Spanish soil, in sign of the total destruction of the Moorish race. A new sect, far worse than the infidels of old, now trample into ruins the sacred temple of the only true faith. If you wish indeed to gain the road to heaven, follow me to victory; and look on the standard of the crucifix which I bear before you, as the basement and guide of your actions upon earth, and of your eternal salvation.

"Sacrifices are dear to the Lord! Christians, I place myself at your head, and together we shall triumph! I lead you on the path to victory; and our enemies, who are the foes of religion and of Christ, shall perish



to a man. Let us swear before heaven, and in presence of the image of God, not to lay down our arms before they be exterminated—the philosophers, the troops of the line, and the militia, one and all!

“Let us cry aloud; and with one voice, and in the name of our Redeemer, Long live the Faith! long live our absolute King!—and, for the safety and the glory of these, blood and flames to every Constitutionalist!

“MUNOZ, the General.”

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## CHAPTER XII.

WHILE I read this very characteristic specimen of Christianity as *practised*, and reflected what it ought to be as *professed*, following the laudable example of my betters, by letting my commentary far exceed the text in length and obscurity, the reverend and pugnacious author had joined his disciples; and the bugles sounded to arms, the bustle of preparation became general. The fighting men sprang from the earth with alacrity; the women busily commenced to repack and arrange the baggage, strike the tents, and load the mules; while even the ecclesiastical incumbences showed some signs of activity, as if aroused from their torpor by the inspiration of the scene.

When a pause in the bugle sounds allowed me distinctly to hear the hundred echoes, in which they beautifully died away; a sharper, but not less harmonious strain came from the mountain, distant and faint at first, but swelling as each loud-mouthed cavern caught the tones and sent them downwards. I then knew the spirit-stirring trumpet-blast; and, as

they vibrated around, I seemed to inhale the very breath of the freedom they proclaimed. The bugles from below loudly answered the defying notes. The trumpets again, and more fiercely than before, replied. Blast succeeded to blast, and echo angrily mocked echo, as if the strained throats of the mortal musicians had given sensation as well as sound to animate the voices of the hills.

During the continuance of this fierce concert, the monk had addressed, and read to his assembled followers, the to them inspiring, but, in my view, the impious proclamation. I could not hear his single voice amidst the clangour of loud sounds, but I clearly saw his violent gestures, at every passage of his extempore speech, or printed production, which demanded particular emphasis. He proved himself in this instance as eloquent as he was zealous and brave, for no sooner had he finished his harangue than the collected crowd bore testimony to its effect. The monk raised his sword and crucifix on high, and gave a signal shout, which was joined by full two hundred voices, each vying with the rest in force. Prolonged and repeated yells sent the signals of fanatic zeal into the narrowest and deepest recesses of the mountains, and every rock returned the salute in reverberations that reached the skies. The descending bands of the patriots, now becoming visible in every pass, caught the dying tones, and flung their hoarse shouts upon the vibrating circles of the air, till all the atmosphere seemed filled with sounds, as if thousands of ærial sprites were mocking this discordant, yet animating chorus.

I could scarcely calculate the time passed in these preparatory sounds, which formed an appalling overture to the deadly drama about to be acted. I felt myself so worked upon by the wild and impressive scene, and so interested in the coming contest, that had I been personally involved in its results, I could

not have been more alive to the transactions which were passing, or more heedless of the time they consumed.

As the invading party moved steadily upwards to gain the Spanish ground, the patriot defenders of the soil poured down and took up their position, at a few hundred yards distance from the French line of demarcation. Sergeant Passepartout, and his ten soldiers stood firmly at their post, their regular position only slightly and occasionally disturbed by an impatient attitude or disapproving gesture at some movement of one of the hostile parties.

During this opening of the enterprize I kept near to the hut, following the movements of the opposing parties, with my anxious glances, but turning them frequently towards the window of the secret chamber, in expectation of seeing a female form appear; and as I intently listened to catch the report of the first hostile musket my ear involuntarily turned towards her, whose possible call for assistance I held myself ready to attend. But as the champions of the Faith advanced with apparent resolution, gallantly led on by Father Munoz, and clearly opposed to an enemy of double their number, I could not help feeling for some minutes that interest in the fortunes of *the few*, so natural even when one considers them as foes; and I went mechanically down the rugged side of the ravine, my gun in hand, following their line of march. I was really startled, after a little time, at seeing my near contact with their rearward platoon, and I was brought to my senses by the shame of thus almost identifying myself with it, on hearing the following chorus to a kind of battle song, which the whole party simultaneously chanted, as Father Munoz, having passed the frontier line, struck his standard upon the earth, and sounded the key note of the martial air, to which the wretched words were adapted.

Murieron los Liberales,  
Murio la Constitucion,  
Porque viva el Rey Fernando  
Con la Patria y Religion!

Let the Liberals die,  
And their Code let it perish!  
That the King, with the Faith,  
And the Country, may flourish.

Brought to my recollection by the besotted bigotry of this stanza, I stopped short and resumed my proper character of a distant observer of the scene. I sat upon a rock, which gave me an ample view of the hut, and allowed me to mark distinctly the progress of Father Munoz's band, the movements of the constitutionals, and the conduct of Sergeant Passepartout and his neutral party.

Father Munoz still led the van; but once within the Spanish territory, he turned round to his band, and quickened their advance by vigorous and inspiring gestures, which were repeated by those close to his person, and who formed his staff. The fighting men intrepidly moved on, and as they came up close to their commander, formed in the order of battle which he traced. But nothing seemed to prove more completely the confidence of the whole, than the promptitude with which the remainder of the party, monks on their mules, women and children on foot, followed the warriors, not resting on the safe protection of French territory for the result of the day, but closely joining themselves to the chances of the coming fight. This was, however, not caused alone by their certainty of success, although that was unbounded, but by the advantage taken of it by their skilful leader, for he knew that the generous enemy would rather suffer his advance to the most advantageous ground for his inferior numbers, than oppose it at the risk of injury to the helpless followers, thus apparently but not actually exposed.

The ground on which the champions of the Faith were deploying was a plain of small extent, rugged, certainly, for their movements, but smooth in comparison with the rocks and ravines which were around it. It ran along the side of the mountain to the eastward, and lost itself in a gorge of deep and dark appearance. This plain seemed the last accessible pasture ground on our side of the mountain, for the abrupt elevation which bounded it, forbade the ascent of any animals but the wild goat in search of safety from his pursuers, or the men whose love for liberty made them struggle now through its rude obstructions.

The force of the Constitutionals must have been full five hundred men, but more than half that number, as soon as the exact amount of their enemies was visible, were seen to retreat from the advanced position retained by the rest, and they retired along the narrow pass which was about to be contested, until they disappeared from the scene of approaching action. This was evidently done by the patriot chieftain from a chivalric feeling, founded, perhaps, on contempt for his foe: but he ranged and stationed his remaining men with great care, in the heights at each side of the pass, and in a position which, if defended with courage, appeared to me impregnable.

This chief was, with others about him, at first seen on horseback; and the skill and safety with which they manage their small and active steeds, was almost miraculous, and seemed to excuse the exaggeration of the country people, who, vaunting the feats of Mina's cavalry, reported them to gallop on the most pointed peaks of the rocks. The person in chief command on the present occasion, was full as conspicuous as was Father Munoz in his important post; and soon dismounting from his horse, he put himself on a personal equality with his rival. The generals seemed to vie with each other in vigour and activity, and I cannot

describe the feeling with which I thought that the patriot chief might be Mina himself, or my intense curiosity to obtain exact information on that point. Passepartout and his men remained with steadiness on their own ground. The sergeant proved himself on this day a veteran; and the young raw conscripts under his command, caught the inspiration of his disciplined demeanour, and kept coolly observant of events, the novel and exciting nature of which must have been a trial to their inexperienced nerves.

When Father Munoz and his fighting fanatics had reached the foot of the rude heights where the patriots were posted (the monks and women having halted on the plain,) a short pause was made. Each man seemed to breathe awhile for fresh energy, to encounter the danger thus so well envisaged by the whole. It was indeed a formidable sight. The patriots seemed in their position quite invulnerable. They were individually niched in the rocky recesses, from which they had the power of picking out their assailants, and sacrificing them one by one, while collectively they might defy the utmost efforts of their foes. Still the latter showed no dastard hanging back; and when, at their general's command, the bugle at last sounded the signal for firing, a discharge took place, not in regular volley; but in the independent way, called by us "hedge firing," such as is practised for a *feu-de-joie*, every man selecting his object, and firing at discretion. I marked the flashes of this first discharge, heard the sudden and faint concussion of the sounds, which fell flattened, as it were, against the rocks; then followed the progress of the concentrated clouds sent up from every musket, and as they at first enveloped, but with gradual dispersion, soon showed the patriots again, I watched anxiously for the return of the deadly salute, as the echoes caught its report, and sent it in distant and irregular repetitions from crag to crag.

But not a shot was returned by the patriots, who stood firmly in their position; nor could I distinguish that they were diminished by one man. Father Munoz's bugle sounded "cease firing," and a momentary silence ensued. He seemed to wait the enemy's fire, but it came not, and there was something inexpressibly awful in the fixed and expectant attitudes of the assailants, waiting for the death they braved, and the statue-like aspect of their enemies, each standing immovably on his rocky pedestal, and not deigning to notice the assault so fiercely given and so unflinchingly received.

Whatever might be Father Munoz's feelings, he was determined that those of his followers should not flag. He once more raised his crucifix on high, and taking off his hat, he waved it round his head, and uttered just such a shout as had before burst from him. Its effect was, as then, electrical. Every throat of his band was opened out, and a long and loud huzza burst spontaneously from all; its echoes died far away, and then came down from the mountain-side a harsh and general screech of *laughter*, that seemed vollied from the bitterest depths of contempt. The unwearied echoes caught the tones, and in their insensible yet living mimicry, they prolonged them from hill to hill, blending with each other the loudest with the feeblest repetitions, in a way so wild and thrilling, as to give an air of fiendish mockery to the whole. My blood felt frozen, and every nerve cramped up, as I breathlessly gazed on the immovable men from whom such strange and demon sounds proceeded.

The fanatics, if as much shocked, were much more moved than I; for after giving an instant to the rising of their indignant desperation, it burst forth in a torrent of vigorous and varied development. Father Munoz, as usual, gave the signal for this out-bursting. He jumped with furious gestures, stamped, and raved. The whole force of his followers was instantly dis-

played in the like antics—the women screamed, tore their hair, and danced in frantic ecstasy—and even the lazy monks clapped their hands, thumped their breasts, and uttered loud and pious execrations.

But the insulted warriors did not rest contented with these tokens of rage. Their destiny led them forward to a more ruinous demonstration. They rushed one and all against the rocky bulwarks before them, and with straining efforts clambered over every obstacle to their destruction. It was their day of doom! No sooner was the whole body of their force fairly entangled in the rocks than a loud shout from above, which seemed to speak both vengeance and victory, was the signal for a shower of ponderous rocks, torn from the earth by arms new nerved by hate, and hurled with a deadly accuracy of aim. Nothing could be more terrible than the simultaneous discharge of these savage missiles. The huge blocks of granite, shoved from their resting places, at first rolled slowly down, like animals coiling up their energies for the fierce speed they were about to put forth. Some went on gradually for a time, on the smooth slopes which here and there smiled greenly among the grey and desolate heaps of granite. Others at once bounded off from crag to crag, but a very short space, and a period almost imperceptible, intervened between the desperate setting out of these solid bodies and their rapid crash into thousands of fragments, every one an instrument of death. The view of this silent shower of fate was almost momentary, but it was harrowing. The wretched victims of its coming effects looked towards it—shrieks of terror broke from some, as they flung themselves upon the earth, to be mangled and crushed without an effort—others held up their arms as if such feeble intervention might avert their fate—others more collected shrunk safely down behind projecting rocks—and a few from their stony ambuscades took steady aim, and returned from their mus-



kets unerring answers to the deadly salutation thus sent down.

Three or four of the patriots were hit and fell. Fell a fourth of the fanatics were struck to the earth. My eye involuntarily fixed on Father Munoz, and the group which stood, like him, braving what the bravest might have shrunk from. Several received the bruising or deep-cutting splinters, but the general stood unharmed. He urged on his men with unabated vigour, and such as had survived the shock, and were not disabled, prepared for an attempt to force the heights. The partial execution done by the last discharge gave encouragement to their marksmen, and revenge for their killed or maimed companions enforced the example set by their daring chief. But they fought against impossibilities and without a chance of success. The patriots, having exhausted their prepared store of rocky missiles, now took their fire-arms into use, and their impetuosity for close combat being not to be restrained, they abandoned their position, and hurried down to meet their foes.

A more desperate conflict then commenced, and bayonets, pikes, and swords, were soon brought into action, as individual exertion and bodily force more particularly characterized the fight. I observed many instances of great bravery in the single combats into which the contest was now divided, but the result was never for a moment doubtful. The patriots on all sides drove their opponents down, and a retreat from their temporary advance was soon general among the fanatics. Father Munoz made almost incredible efforts to rally and reassure his men. If he gave up a foot of ground, it was only in exertion to restrain the flight, now becoming general. He seemed to seek danger wherever it was thickest, and from him alone the patriot warriors shrunk. At first I thought this was caused by fear of his prowess, but I soon perceived it to proceed from respect for his pro-

fession. No man would fight him hand to hand; and though several of his immediate followers were wounded, and two or three fell dead beside him, I could see that no musket was levelled at his person. Several chance balls; however, as I afterwards ascertained, pierced his hat and the flowing drapery of his robe; and the brass scabbard of his sabre was contused in more than one place. He certainly escaped enough of risks on this day to strengthen his disciples' belief that he bore "a charmed life."

During the continuance of this sanguinary scene, the women of "the Faith," and the assistant monks, prayed, wept, and screamed by turns. Perceiving at length that the day was lost, they fell back with their frail possessions upon the French territory. They were soon followed by many of the discomfited and disabled combatants—but Father Munoz maintained his ground, shifting from rock to rock as each spot appeared susceptible of defence, or while any aid was left to his exertions.

During the whole affair, the commander of the patriot force was distinguishable not more by his valour than his surprising activity. He bounded from place to place wherever an enemy was to be opposed or a friend assisted. On several occasions he joined in personal combat with two or more of the enemy, and his victory seemed half achieved before he struck a blow. He was the mark for many well directed shots. I several times observed the ground ploughed up by bullets close at his feet, or splinters struck from rocks beside him or above his head. He was once wounded, but slightly it appeared, for he merely tore his handkerchief from his neck and bound it round his arm; and instantly levelling his pistol, fired at the brawny fellow by whom he had been hit. He had a sure revenge, for the fellow, shot through the heart or head, I could not at that distance distinguish which, sprang high from the crag where he had stood—the

certain movement following a wound in either of those vital parts—and, dropping dead, he rolled down from rock to rock in frightful succession, his limbs and carcass almost visibly dislocated and defaced, as he hung-dangling for a moment on a jagged point, and then was dashed upon some lower projection. I could not resist the hope which flashed upon me that this might be the ruffian Sanchez, or at least that he had fallen, for whenever he came across my mind a presentiment of ill seemed coupled with the recollection.

As the retreating fanatics came again across the frontier line into France, they were severally disarmed by Sergeant Passepartout and his men, and I thought I could distinguish in their abruptness the contemptuous dislike which even the partial bravery of the vanquished was not sufficient to entirely remove. As soon as they had given up their arms, these outcasts, thus promptly disbanded, disposed of themselves with all the vagabond recklessness which I had observed at my first meeting with them. A few stood, sullenly watching the fruitless struggle of their gallant chief, who called on them in vain. Others, most of them wounded, joined the monks and women, who wept and wailed loudly as they applied rude remedies, and staunched, or bound up their hurts. A few fled up the gorges of the hills, apparently ashamed of their too easy defeat; and I was only withheld from inquiring of them the name of the patriot chief, by the fear of insulting and irritating their already goaded feelings. Some lay down in the ravine by the side of the rivulet, as it would seem, to die. Not one came near the hut; and my surprise at their avoiding this shelter where they might have expected aid, was not removed till I afterwards learned that Father Munoz had most peremptorily commanded his troops to hold the hut inviolate—and he was thus implicitly obeyed, even in defeat and ruin.

As the fugitives came towards me I could plainly distinguish their features, and I recognized several of those who had been my fellow lodgers two days before at Gedro. I could have well enough occupied myself in reading the varieties of character displayed in the different expression of their countenances, from indignant rage to hardened indifference, had not my attention been particularly fixed on one, whom I instantly knew to be Sanchez. A creeping sensation, such as some people feel at the sight of particular reptiles, seemed to curdle through my veins as I gazed on this object of my abhorrence. I saw him lie down behind a rock, which intervened between him and the foes he ran from as well as the friends he had forsaken, but which allowed me an ample view of his figure, every movement of which was now familiar to me:

I had frequently during the last two or three eventful hours, forced my eyes from the scene on which they appeared rivetted, to look round at the house I was so well inclined, but so little able to protect, had injury been attempted. But at each glance, while no danger really existed, I could see no object on which hostility might be practised. Now, however, when this desperate and already detected ruffian, overflowing no doubt with venom, and projecting revenge, came within reach of harm to the hut and its one inhabitant, I saw, as I turned my watchful gaze abruptly round, the girl of the house, in her usual dress, standing in the garden, and close to the little telegraph, which she grasped with one hand, while with the other she waved a silken flag, in animating gestures of victory and welcome.

Where has she been? How has she come here? Was she with her mother on the mission to the patriots? Did she remain in the secret chamber? And where is the mysterious female? All these were the quick and self-put questions of my brain, which came

in a simultaneous and unanswered rush. My eye then turned with inquiring rapidity across the ravine towards which the signal flag was waved. There I saw a scene of incomplete and perplexing information—but giving, with a startling discovery, a promise of an instant and ample denouement.

The last of the defeated fanatics—and that I need hardly say, was no other than Father Munoz,—was disarmed, and had repassed the frontier. He was deprived of his sabre and pistols—and he slowly retired—his crucifix held to his breast—his hands clasped together—his head down. The patriots were collected in an irregular group, forming a broken crescent, in about the centre of which stood their victorious leader, with the other officers, who had supported him so well. The trumpets blew a flourish; a thrice repeated shout drowned the exulting notes; and their long huzzas and *vivas* proclaimed the hero's fame, to all who listened. "Long live Don Melchior!" "Long live De Trevazos!" "Long live the Avenger!" were the enthusiastic tribute to the conqueror's praise—and to me the proud announcement of the hero I had already welcomed as my friend. For as he gracefully removed his plumed cap, and displayed his ardent and animated countenance, I could not be mistaken, and I learned the truth, which, I dare say, my readers need not now be told, that it was no other than the stranger visiter of the preceding night, who now stood displayed in all the pride and glory of success.

"My quick-glancing gaze flew back in search of *her*, who should, I thought, have been the first to hail, and hallow by her presence, the triumph of the scene. My eye only rested on the Cagot costume of the girl, waving her flag, and hurrying down the rugged path. And when again I turned my looks to meet the hero, they caught the intercepting form of the crouched ruffian, who looked up towards the

scene round a projecting elbow of the rock, by which he was reclined. I marked the impatient acknowledgments of Don Melchior, as he bowed his thanks to his gallant band. But placing one hand to his heart, he pointed the other towards the hill where I stood, and he followed the direction thus given to his soldier's observation, with a quick and active step, attended only for a few paces by Sergeant Passepartout, to whom he delivered his sword and pistols, and who seemed, as he accepted them, to apologize to the gallant owner of the weapons he deserved so well to wear.

I could not restrain the movement of joy, which made me struggle over the rude obstacles that kept me from the ravine. My eye never quitted Don Melchior for one moment, and it was not till I saw him pass by the rock where Sanchez lay concealed, that a pang of apprehension for his safety flashed fiercely across my brain. I stood for an instant arrested on the spot—and it was in vain, that I recovered myself and stirred, as I saw the crouching villain rise, and follow, with bent body and long strides, the victim he had too surely marked.

Don Melchior came quickly on with light and unsuspecting step, and the firm, yet cautious tread of the murderer fell unheard behind him, on the mossy slope he traversed. The moment I perceived his perilous situation, I shouted with all my might, at once to warn him, and scare the assassin; but he looked up towards me, and returned the shout with a joyous expression, for the welcome he supposed it to convey; and the unruffled assassin, only raised his arm the higher that the blade it wielded might more steadily fall upon his destined prey.

Joined to my shout, a piercing scream burst from the path close to my side, and the hood of *the Cagot girl* hung floating from behind that beauteous head, whose thick curled ringlets I could not fail to recog-

nise, as a light form bounded past me. Don Melchior stood for a moment transfixed in surprise, at the sounds of alarm, and at the same instant Passepartout and his men, catching the figures of the hero and his assassin, which the rock had till then concealed, joined in the loud and terrified signal which I and the frantic girl had raised. Don Melchior, startled, and perplexed, just turned his head half round, when Sanchez, with one fierce exclamation, "We have met!" plunged his murderous knife with a downward slope, into the hero's side. Don Melchior tottered from him, and was falling—when I, with an instinctive effort, raised my gun to my shoulder, and having covered the villain, was in the act of putting my finger to the trigger, when a flash from Sergeant Passepartout's carbine, arrested the movement, and before the report reached my ear, the coward lay writhing on the earth in the agonies of an immediate and far too easy death.

How often in the course of this recital, have I wished that my pen could fly across the page, and trace, in words of flaming speed, thoughts and events as rapid and as hot as the lightning. But now I seem to wish a long and lingering pause: for how describe the accumulated burst of feelings which followed the assassin's stroke! "To fall *thus*!" was I believe, the bitter thought that struck all those who saw and who could think. The gallant comrades of his glory, the astonished and delighted witnesses of his courage, his own troops, Passepartout and his soldiers, and myself, all saw and felt no doubt alike. But there was one among us yet who felt herself at that moment as alone in life, and whose heart appeared to be pierced by the stroke so steadily aimed at her lover's. She had force to fly to the spot, such force as makes the body writhe when severed from existence. She reached her lover, wild, screaming, and exhausted. He had fallen to the ground, and with out-stretched

arms he received the beauteous form which sunk upon his, to staunch with senseless weight his wide and gushing wound. I was in a moment one of the group that surrounded this pair, of whom we could scarcely imagine which was the nearer to death.

The mixed feelings of grief, astonishment, and horror, agitated every bystander around me, but in addition to these I had to suffer that wild and still incredulous conviction that made me certain of the fact discovered to me, but doubtful of my own intellect.

The female before me was, I saw it, *the Cagot girl*. Her dress, her height, her whole appearance left no possibility of doubt, but her form of symmetry, her face of beauty, how could these be there? and when, with a convulsive spasm, she tore open the firm-clasped capulet, and exposed her neck and heaving bosom, what was my amazement to see, instead of the gross deformity I had in fancy loathed, perfection that might invite a sculptor's hand, and make his heart thrill as he gazed.

I hastily threw her cloak and hood over this rich field of beauty, which I felt to be already violated by the rude, yet admiring stare of the astonished observers.



## CHAPTER XIII.

For several minutes the bodies lay untouched and motionless. An attempt to clasp his unconscious mistress in his arms was instantly followed by a fainting fit, which rendered the fallen hero as insensible as she. The blood gushed freely from his wound, and covered her profusely, and had it not been for this streaming evidence of life, their pallid faces and fixed forms might have seemed silently to claim the shelter of a grave.

A stupifying cloud appeared to hang over us who stood by. The spectacle before us, would at any time, even by a train of preparation, have been enough to have produced a bewildering inaction, but the violence of the shock from triumph to despair, the sudden wrenching of the joy which seemed rooted in all hearts—the instant revulsion of feelings, all flowing in channels the most opposite to the point towards which they were thus strained, this was too much for even manhood to sustain, and a group of agonized and powerless observers was the result.

I believe I was one of the first who shook off this lethargy, and I was aroused only by the impetuous grief of one of Don Melchior's soldiers, who, coming with others to the spot, would have rushed towards the body of his adored commander, to strain it in his arms. This abruptness shocked me, I feared that the life blood would have ebbed away in the violent movement of the body; and, as I interposed between it and the distracted soldier, Father Munoz's figure caught my eye, as he was in the very act of dressing one of his wounded followers, not a hundred yards from me. Salvation seemed within my glance. I pushed my way right

through the crowd around me; and just as I cleared the lane of men, and stepped out into the open space, my foot actually touched, and had nearly fallen upon the out stretched corpse of the atrocious Sanchez. I shrank back with a spasm of disgust. The wretch betrayed in death what he might have, when living, succeeded to conceal. His face was bare, and his upturned eyes, and the curl upon his lip, spoke volumes of malignity and baseness. A thick black stream flowed from his temple, where the bullet had entered, and added to the ghastly expression of his colourless cheek. I sprang across the corpse, and was in a few moments close to Father Munoz.

He looked at me, and seeing the evident expression of distress which prompted my breathless entreaty that he would accompany me, he paused for a moment, and laid down the half bandaged leg of the sufferer he was relieving.

"What is the nature of the wound?" asked he.

"A desperate thrust of a knife," cried I, "close to the heart, if Heaven *has* kept that unhurt."

"A knife! *that* cannot wait, *this* may," returned he, with animation, and adding a word or two of comfort to his patient, he hurried with me along the track I had just left behind. He did not ask me whom I had summoned him to attend. In his evident anxiety to afford aid, he not only omitted to inquire whether it was officer, or private, friend or foe; but he also seemed to forget the defeat and disgrace under which he himself laboured, proving the nobleness of his nature, by the triumph of genuine benevolence over the most powerful prejudices and passions of the mind.

I had seen enough of this extraordinary man, to be convinced that the rank of my friend would in nothing influence his attentions. But I was not sure of the effect which a knowledge of his opinions might produce; and I trembled at the risk I was about to

run in naming at once the wounded man. I felt it, however, but just to do so towards *him*, in order that I might be enabled to combat the repugnance which was naturally to be excited in the priest; and towards the priest himself, as a matter of delicacy, not to surprise his still festering feelings, by the too abrupt view of his late successful rivals.

There was not a moment to lose.

"Father Munoz," said I, "I have not at such a time stood on points of form. I have ventured to put you to a severe trial. The man whom you are about to see, but whom I fear you cannot save, is no other than Don Melchior de Trevazos."

"What! Don Melchior! God be praised!" ejaculated he; and my heart sunk with disappointed grief to hear the expression, and in dread of the refusal of assistance which I expected to follow it.

"God be praised!" reiterated the monk; "you said he still lived?"

"I fear to ask the question now," said I, "but he was not dead when I left the spot."

"Then I may be in time to save him—or, at least, to breathe the words of holy truth into his ear, and give comfort to his parting spirit; let us hasten to him!"

These reassuring words were scarcely finished, when we reached the place where the wailing Spaniards, with Sergeant Passepartout and his men, stood closely encircling the still senseless bodies of Don Melchior and Malvide. At sight of the monk, his patriot fellow countrymen made way for him one and all, with every demonstration of respect, inspired by his triple character of general, priest, and doctor. When he reached the centre of the circle, and saw the afflicting spectacle, he started with a movement which seemed the combined effect of astonishment and horror. All the austere collectedness of his nature was overpowered by the scene; and, to the

amazement of myself and the other spectators, the rigid priest, the stoical physician, the intrepid warrior, threw himself upon his knees, bent low over the bodies, and giving a full vent to his feelings, which were a mystery to all around him, he burst into a passionate flood of tears. He made no affected efforts to conceal his emotion, but for some moments sobbed aloud in speechless anguish. His recovery from this gush of feeling was as instantaneous as had been the attack. He started up quickly, and with a bitter and self-reproaching tone, exclaimed, "Good God, what am I about!—while he is dying—and *she!* Heaven forgive this last and worst exposure of criminal anguish!"

With the utmost promptness and self-command, he commenced the operations of his surgical skill, anxiety of the deepest kind marked upon his countenance, where the violent traces of some fierce conflict of passions were stamping their deep but fugitive imprint. It seemed as if his mind was separated into distinct parts—all the faculties of judgment and exertion bearing on the immediate objects of his case, while the wild emotions of personal feeling swept like a hurricane through his brain. So, at least, I read the convulsed expression of his face and frame, and the sequel will prove that I read rightly.

Father Munoz had, in the first instance, to give a divided attention to the senseless pair before him—but he gave it as though he felt them to be as one. He promptly but steadily seized Don Melchior's wrist, and felt his scarcely beating breast. Almost, at the same instant, he took Malvide's fair hand in his, and I plainly distinguished the trembling of his arm while he counted the faint pulsation of hers. Without inquiries from those around him as to the causes of what he saw, he appeared to read what had passed in the evidence before him, and he applied himself without hesitation to give aid where assistance was most important.

I cannot pretend to recollect the means of relief which he applied to Don Melchior. What styptic he employed, or how he treated the wound, are points of little importance to the reader, and were not, even at the moment, attended to by me. It was enough for me to observe, that various accessories to Father Munoz's skill were contained in the well filled cavities of his leathern girdle, which held, besides his prayer-book, and the thick folds of his proclamation, some instruments of surgery, with two or three phials and rolls of lint, plaster, and bandage. From this assortment he chose whatever he thought most suited to the case; and such was my confidence in his skill and his integrity, that I felt neither apprehension as to the first, nor doubt of the latter. In his hands I considered Don Melchior as near to a chance of safety, as was consistent with his apparently desperate state. My immediate observation turned therefore to the other object, which so irresistibly shared without weakening the deep interest excited for the unfortunate chieftain.

Scarcely had the monk's still sensitive fingers loosed their hold of Malvide's arm, when she, like some instrument in which vibration had been awakened by the touch, gave signs of returning animation. A shivering movement told that the nerves were newly strung; and the dawn of reviving nature broke, in a streaky flush, upon her pallid cheek. Her quivering lip and trembling lid, rising at once, as if to take in air and light, showed the instinctive struggle of mortality to cling to life; and the awakening of the mind was almost instantly perceptible, in the sudden opening of eyes and mouth, the distension of nostril—that membrane, as eloquent as either feature—the incredulous stare, as memory told what had passed—the hand pressed against the brow to feel if sense were there—the abrupt start and half articulate scream, while reason's fully risen orb flashed its maddening

beam upon her. Recollecting the fulness of her misery, she turned her looks upon her lover, and withheld from flinging herself upon his bleeding body, by the dread of interrupting the monk's benevolent care, her emotion burst forth in one of those suppressed and suffocating screams, so terrific to the hearer, and which seemed to rend the utterer's heart.

Her countenance was a picture of inexpressible agony, as her glance fell alternately upon Don Melchior, and her own dress, which was covered with his blood. She knelt and wrung her hands. She did not speak, as if the fear of agitating him overpowered the natural wish, at such a time, to let her heart overflow in words. But her lips quivered convulsively; her eyes were raised, at times, and then, for an instant, closed; and she, more than once, seized her blood-stained capulet, and hugged it with frantic energy, as though she thus enfolded to her breast all of him which she dared venture to embrace.

It was not certainly a fitting moment for a critical examination of the interesting girl; and even now I wonder at the strange perversity of feeling which prompted me to enter upon such a task. But such was the combined effect of admiration, pity, and surprise, that I forgot for awhile every more important consideration, and I began to observe the object that should have inspired them with as minute a scrutiny as one exercises in a ball-room, or on a race-course. I could scarcely believe my eyes—those perjured evidences, which so lately told me that this heroine of mine was lame and loathsome, and which now testified to her surpassing grace and beauty. She was, indeed, most beautiful; and her anguished movements showed sorrow in such subdued and natural grace, as might have put joy's fantastic antic's to the blush.

There are various kinds of female beauty, as all the world allows; and each in its turn considered the

most lovely. The rich red bloom of health, the pallid tint of grief, the azure or the hazel eye, curls of light brown, or ringlets of deep jet—which is admired the most, or which is the most to be admired? While each makes the assortment that he fancies best, I may, perhaps, be suffered to express my notion on a point which ever has held, and ever will hold, mankind in a state of most lucky disagreement.

To my mind, *variety* in the face of a lovely woman, as in that of nature's self, is the greatest possible charm. To suppose loveliness in a woman, is to admit that her features, skin, and hair are all *good*. But these are individually unimportant points; for it signifies little whether a complexion be white or brown, a nose Roman or Grecian, an eye black or blue. Neither is it by those faces where all may be called *in keeping*, that we are most pleased. If we are told that a woman is beautiful and *fair*, we expect to see light eyes, light air, brilliant skin, and rosy cheeks. If a *brunette* is announced, dark locks, dark eyes, and dark complexion, spontaneously associate themselves in our minds. We see each object agreeing with, or even surpassing our expectation; we mark and marvel at the regularity of nature's master-pieces, and we acknowledge each beautiful of its kind.

But this is different far from that amazed delight with which we gaze upon the rare, yet to-be-met-with, specimens of beauty, still more exquisite, by which we are every moment taken by surprise, and where wonder forms the chief spell of our fresh springing admiration; where we see black folds of glossy hair shrouding a snow-white brow, and bright blue eyes: or where an orb of hazel, or still more eloquent grey, beams on a cheek of bloom; or where auburn ringlets curl round an eye of black, whose long dark lashes fall on a colourless cheek, from which early care has too soon plucked the roses.

These are a few of the many incongruous yet fascinating combinations which nature loves to effect, baffling our conjectures as to what is beautiful, and leaving perfection as undefinable as it is various.

Malvide's was, to my taste, a sample of beauty's best variety. I cannot venture to describe the fluctuating charms of her countenance, which displayed an ever shifting sameness of loveliness, like the moving surface of the sea, each instant changing, but eternally the same. Her hair was dark; her brow, and cheek, and bosom brightly fair; her eyes deep grey—long liquid shapes, not starting out as if to peer into the world, but retiring rather towards the brain, from which they drew their intellectual beams. Her mouth—that next best feature of the face, whose every movement telegraphs the mind, ere the tongue can speak its bidding—was neither small nor large, a happy medium between primness and expanse; lips bedewed and ripe, sufficiently apart to let the soft breath keep them moist, and the white teeth shine between; the nether one indented towards the chin, and the upper softly marked with the silken down, which is as essential to the beauty of a dark haired woman, as the fringe that gives expression to her eye, or the ringlets that adorn her brow.

I can go no further in this sketch. Let the retail dealers in beauty each fill it up as he may choose; and, with such elements as I have described, I defy any or all to convert Malvide into aught but what she *was*, a beautiful—a *perfectly* beautiful girl.

While I was employed in collecting the materials for my most imperfect portrait, let it not be supposed that Father Munoz was indifferent to the subject of *his* care. And I think my readers will already have acquitted me of a rising charge of levity at such a time, by anticipating the monk's announcement that Don Melchior's wound was not, in the least degree, dangerous. Such was, in fact, the happy intelligence



promptly announced to the anxious lookers on. rib—but heaven knows which, and anatomists may inquire—those natural bulwarks which so often thwart the deadly designs of blade and bullet, had interposed between the knife of the assassin and the hero's life. The former was turned aside, the latter saved; and the rush of blood which caused us such alarm, was perhaps, the best token of the intended victim's preservation.

When the salutary pain inflicted in the dressing of Don Melchior's wound brought him to a sense of his suffering and his actual state, his first exclamation was "Malvide!" and he wildly looked around for her, whom he called. His eyes fell upon Father Munoz's face, and a surprised ejaculation escaped him.

"What do I see?" cried he. "Is this possible to you, Mazaredo! my long lost friend!"

"Hush, hush!" replied the monk. "It is, indeed, no other than your old friend; but this is no time for explanation. You are hurt, but not badly; repose is all that is required to your rapid recovery. Do not speak another word."

"But this dress, this tonsure?" for the monk's bare head showed the mark of his calling.

"'Tis even so, Melchior," said, or rather sighed he, as if one passing feeling of regret rose upon him in his own despite.

"Ah, my own Malvide!" exclaimed Don Melchior, his fugitive glance having rested upon her.

"Not a word, not a word, my beloved," said she, pressing her hand against her own lips, as if the breath of *his* existence lay within them.

Scarcely a whisper broke from one of the many anxious observers, until the wounded object of their care and caution was safely laid in bed in the secret chamber of the Cagot's hut, which had been so long the place of shelter, rather than repose to the beautiful tenant, who now resigned her refuge, and threw aside the mystery that hung round her and it.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I CANNOT pretend to strict accuracy of dates, but for four or five days Don Melchior's convalescence went regularly on, and in less than a week he was able to leave his bed. I know not if his rapid recovery was to be attributed to the slightness of his wound, the goodness of his constitution, or the skill of his physician. But, be the chief cause what it might, I am sure that the care of his nurse was not the *least*. Most ably was she seconded by the assiduous old Cagot woman, who showed, on every occasion that required it, an intelligence that went as far to remove my belief in the incorrigible dullness of her race, as her benevolence went to confirm my conviction of their susceptibility to the best feelings of humanity. And I may perhaps thus passingly be allowed to hope, that should any one, led by these pages to visit this excellent old being in her wild retreat, find any difficulty in discovering *her*, they will let *their* benevolence take place of their curiosity, or go hand in hand with it, and seek out other objects among the proscribed race, who will, I venture to predict, repay, at least with gratitude, all the kindness that may be shown them.

Don Melchior being installed in the whilom secret chamber, Malvide became the temporary tenant of my closet, while I shifted my quarters to the inn at Gedro, and took possession of the same moiety of a room which I had occupied on the first night of this adventurous epoch. My days were passed entirely at the Cagot's hut, and the frequent companion of my walk backwards and forwards was Father Munoz, who, though much occupied with the care of his un-

fortunate and defeated comrades, with his own political correspondence and personal concerns, still found time enough to devote to the duty he had undertaken towards his former friend, with whom he passed hours together in secret conversation. I observed that he had made a point of not seeing Malvide in any of his visits. This was an understood arrangement between Don Melchior and himself, and I was quickly made acquainted with it and its cause by the sweet girl whose modesty made her pass the subject over lightly, and evinced no vanity on an occasion that might, more than most others, have excused a display of that most natural and most general weakness of our nature.

Malvide and myself became, as may be supposed, in a short time, very intimate. While Don Melchior and Father Munoz were shut up together, she and I used to walk in the neighbourhood of the hut, through the ravine which was the scene of such eventful occurrences, or in the many intricate paths around, to me before unknown, but which were as familiar to her as the izardes which we frequently disturbed in these rambles. We never, however, went out of call from the hut; and Malvide perpetually broke off in recitals of former events, to listen to the hoarse voice of the old woman, who, by a particular sound, gave signal of the monk's departure on a round of professional visits to his wounded soldiers, distributed in rude tents, throughout the vallies of Estaubé and Héas.

It was chiefly in those walks with Malvide, as well as in snatches of conversation with Don Melchior, and from glimpses of confidential chat breaking through the monk's habitual reserve, that I learned enough of former circumstances to be able to enter fully into the feelings and objects of the whole trio. It was not long afterwards till I became perfectly acquainted with all the connecting links of their history, inasmuch as it formed a chain to bind them now together;

and I will, for my readers' satisfaction, throw into as brief a form as possible, the details of former events, so necessary to an understanding of the scenes which I have been just reciting, and of those which succeeded them so quickly.

I pass over, as foreign to the interest of my story, many bustling occupations which broke in on the course of affairs at the hut during Don Melchior's convalescence, as the visits of Sergeant Passepartout, who showed himself throughout this interval in a quite new aspect, smothering the flame of his constitutional gallantry, suppressing the uprisings of his national vanity, and silencing the voice of his provincial *gasconading*, for the *province* itself furnishes the only sufficient epithet to express the *thing*. He was respectful to the lady, who, under her peasant's disguise, he had made love to, good-naturedly solicitous about the man he had saved, and totally silent, as to the villain he slew. He gained the good will and esteem of all concerned, and did not take one liberty in consequence, which was the certain method of preserving what he had acquired. In our moments of familiar chat, he could not, however, help dropping some hints as to his affair with the Arragonese countess, who turned out after all to be an actress from the theatre of Astorga, and the niece of one of the worthy *curés*, forming part of the fugitives of the Faith. But the sergeant was quite satisfied with his conquest, and I felt no inclination to disturb him in its possession, nor to stand in the way of the score of designs he professed against the wives and daughters of the muleteers, and the widows of the poor devils who had been killed in the late affair, who wanted consolation.

» One of the most unpleasant interruptions to the dreary tranquillity of the place, was caused by the burying of the dead bodies. This occupied two whole

days, during which Sergeant Passepartout showed an admirable aptitude for the situation of undertaker and sexton. Under his auspices and the superintendence of his party, some dozens of fine fellows were flung into their graves, head or feet foremost, as the case might be. Neither ceremony nor ceremonial attended their burial. No rites of religion were observed, save the murmured prayer of some kind comrade, as the sods were shovelled in upon each body; and the holiest water that could be sprinkled over them were the tears dashed off from deep bronzed cheeks by hands that had rarely been dipped in the *bénédiction*. A mass was said by Father Munoz the following Sunday in the church of Gavarnie, for the repose of the souls of the fallen. I witnessed this ceremony, and was struck by the imposing and almost more than earthly bearing of the monk, as he paid this gorgeous tribute to the memory of his gone companions. But I was more moved an evening or two afterwards, when, strolling alone over the battle field, I saw a solitary and worn looking man, sitting upon a newly dug grave, and, with some rude instrument, chiselling the name of his comrade, who rotted beneath, on a stupendous mass of granite, a monument large enough to have furnished mausoleums for half the grandees of Spain. The name was, I think, Antonio Ostolazo; but that matters little; it is still to be seen by any one who will explore the desolate vale of Estaubé and the pedestals of Mount Perdu, and I may safely promise a surer immortality to the owner of this eternal monument, than can be afforded by the mouldering fanes which enshrine so many more celebrated and much prouder soldiers.

When these last duties were performed, the remainder of Father Munoz's disjointed band dispersed itself still wider than ever across the sheltering soil of France, and no chance remaining for another attempt at entering Spain in this quarter, those who

were unmaimed during the last effort, went off in different directions towards Bayonne or Toulouse, in search of some new portion of the expelled fanatics, to whose fortunes they might unite their own ill luck. The wounded were, one by one, removed farther into the country, towards the hospitals established for the French army, in which they found effectual succour; so that, at the end of a week, scarcely any of "the Faith" remained near us, and those only of the most desperately and hopelessly wounded, with their wives, and a compassionate monk or two, who had humanity enough not to abandon them quite.

The patriot troops had, after a day or two, retired; Count Pinati, Mina's lieutenant, having come across the hills, after the gallant affair of Puycerda, to take the command of Don Melchior's little division, and join it to the main body of the Catalonian army, as Mina's force was now named.

I have not attempted to sketch the various instances of devoted attachment shown by his soldiers on the occasion of Don Melchior's wound, or during the time of his recovery. It was by force almost that he succeeded in getting them away from the bivouac they had established near the hut, which they, although disarmed like the others on entering the French territory were resolved to watch by and defend against all other treachery on the part of the fanatics; whose bands they suspected to contain more than one villain of Sanchez's stamp. Sergeant Passepourtout also insisted on placing a guard of two of his men on the hut, to preserve it from foul play; and at my strong solicitation, joined with Malvide's, Don Melchior consented to this the first day, but on Father Munoz pledging his own faith for the fair conduct of his followers, all other precautions were given up, and nothing arose to make us repent of the confidence thus placed in them through him.

Having so far cleared the channel through which

my story is to run, I will now, without disturbing the current of events, turn to that backwater of narration, which steadies but does not weaken the stream.

Don Francisco de Trevazos, the father of Don Melchior, one of the innumerable nobles who swarmed in Spain, had held a lucrative situation in the court of Charles IV. previous to his abdication. He was confirmed in it by Ferdinand, having been one of the persons who particularly favoured the designs of the young prince, whom public opinion and state necessity have preserved from being considered a usurper. But Don Francisco was, like many others, actuated by excellent motives in abetting the designs of Ferdinand. Indignant at the virtual sovereignty of the vile Godoy, and deceived by the promise of good in the young prince's character, which was blasted in its very blossoming, the father of our hero, with the majority of the nation, learned too late the extent of their mistake, and found that, of two evils, they had taken *the least*—only because it wanted energy to make itself the greater. Don Francisco was a cordial friend of liberality and reform; his efforts, united with those of many eminent associates, all tended to the ineffectual task of inculcating his own principles into the mind of the new monarch. But a hopeless despondency succeeded to these exertions, and all the truly patriotic men in Spain, waited anxiously for some occasion to take a bold and decisive step towards the regeneration of their country.

It was at this time that the imbecile and unworthy Ferdinand determined on his memorable visit to Bayonne, the scene not less of *his* disgrace, than of Napoleon's dishonour. Many, and among them Don Francisco, saw the consequences of this step, and expostulated with the principal ministers on its imprudence. But it appears too evident, that Ferdinand himself was obstinate in his resolution, with a certain knowledge of what was to be its result.

The conferences and conventions at Bayonne, ended in the formal renunciation of the throne of Spain by Ferdinand and his father, in the nomination of Joseph to the vacant dignity, and the occupation of almost all the strong places in the country by the troops of the French Emperor. This is not the place to canvass political questions, and I pass by the meanness of Ferdinand and the violence of Napoleon, to consider for a moment the situation of those who acted in accordance with the principles which guided the father of my hero, and influenced so deeply the fate of Don Melchior himself.

Joseph, acting either from his own impulse or by excellent advice, made an admirable selection of ministers. They were named at Bayonne in July 1808, and the new king entered his kingdom under the sanction of the names of the best and most enlightened men, who had filled high offices under Charles IV. and Ferdinand. All the public functionaries were confirmed in their places, and they almost all acquiesced in their nomination, and became at once *Afrancesados*, as the adherents of Joseph were soon named.

Under this arrangement, Don Francisco de Travazos continued to hold his place, and he, in common with almost the whole of the nobility and corporate bodies of Spain, gave his willing allegiance to the new king and paid him homage.

No usurper ever mounted a throne with more plausible pretensions or fairer prospects than Joseph. Nominated by his brother, the most powerful of king makers—succeeding to Ferdinand the most contemptible of kings—hailed by the country as a deliverer—the opening acts of his government, being the suppression of that monstrous tribunal impiously called *holy*; the formation of codes of laws; appropriation of church lands to the wants of the state, and the consequent relief of the subject; encouragement of public instruction; patronage of arts, manufactures, and commerce:—these were the titles of Joseph to his throne,



and the excuses of those Spaniards who adopted his claim. If others were wanted, they might be found in the fact of foreign families having reigned over the country since the Austrian succession,—in the absolute necessity of a new dynasty to purge away the abuses of the old—and in the example of the great continental states, which approved and confirmed the appointment of Joseph, and sanctioned the submission of Spain. But having thus briefly considered the arguments in favour of the *Afrancesados*,\* I hurry to remove any notion, which might arise in the reader's mind, that, while making allowances for them, I do not give my whole sympathy to the splendid patriots by whom they were opposed. No! Glory to the brave spirits, which shone forth at that crisis in the fate of Europe, teaching to despots, through their proudest peer, that men must not be bartered like brutes, nor countries transferred like estates, even though a good master be given for a bad one. Freedom may be forced on nations, as maniacs take medicine by compulsion; and the patriots of Spain taught this lesson to the world, that it is better to establish the great principle of liberty, even at the cost of quick recurring bondage, than enjoy for a while comparative happiness, by fixing a precedent of enduring slavery. Such were the views of Porlier, Lacy, Mina, and the rest of the since murdered and proscribed martyrs; such the inspiration that raised the spirit of resistance, which spread on wings of flame, at once desolating and purifying the land. Joseph was driven from his throne, as the type of that presumptuous principle which placed him on it; and Ferdinand recovered his kingdom, by virtue of the imprescriptible right of which he was the unworthy emblem.

\* I would refer the reader interested in the subject, to the able writings and incontrovertible reasonings of Rianosa, Marina, Llorente, and Blaquiere.

## CHAPTER XV.

TWELVE thousand *Afrancesados* followed Joseph into France, giving to him a proud proof of personal attachment, and to nations, generally, a fine lesson of fidelity. Among the refugees were Don Francisco de Trevazos, with his numerous family, and Luis Mazaredo, a physician of Madrid, and his only son, Munoz, then a boy of about fourteen years of age. The expatriated Spaniards fixed themselves chiefly in the towns and villages of the South of France, in sight of those frontiers from which they were proscribed, envying the fortunate patriots who remained possessors of the soil, but proudly conscious of their own pure motives in the very conduct which had brought upon them destruction and disgrace.

Toulouse possessed many advantages for those settlers, who had money to support the expenses of a principal provincial town. Education, the chief object with heads of families, was the main cause of Don Francisco, his family, and Doctor Mazaredo fixing there; and the four sons of the former, with the doctor's only child, and several other young Spaniards, were soon established as inmates in the college.

It is not more easy to account for school friendships, than for those of riper years. One is as much the result of some chance circumstance as the other; and it is scarcely of importance to know by what means the intimacy of young Melchior and his companion Munoz was contracted. For three or four years, during which they remained together in college, their attachment continued to increase, and the

totally different cast of their minds, and utter dissimilarity of character were the means of preserving it unimpaired. They were within a week or two of the same age, and when they came to be seventeen or eighteen years old, their dispositions were fully developed. Melchior always destined for the military service, burned with impatience to commence his career. Munoz, intended by his father for his own profession, applied himself assiduously to its study. The rank of Don Francisco, the ample pension he enjoyed from the French government, and the lucky preservation of a large property, which he had prudently transferred into foreign funds, enabled young Melchior to maintain an excellent appearance, and go much into society, in the atmosphere of which alone he seemed to live. Doctor Mazaredo was poor, scantily pensioned, and only enabled by the profits of his profession to support himself and his son respectably, and without show. Munoz was, moreover, of a turn quite the reverse of his friend, hating company, shunning the world, and giving himself wholly up to abstruse and theoretic study.

Melchior had many opportunities just then of meeting in company Malvide d'Euplandre, only daughter of a man of ancient family and high rank, at that time a warm adherent of the Emperor and of his family, who lived almost entirely at his château, on the banks of the Garonne, a place admirably suited to the indulgence of the deep attachment which almost spontaneously sprung up in the breasts of the young couple. In a few months they were lovers, of the most decided, and, as we have seen, of the most determined stamp.

Munoz had but few chances of seeing Malvide. He never spoke to her; but it so happened, that a sympathy of feeling with his friend, on that one particular point, made him also an adorer of this beautiful girl, to see whom was to love. An accidental glimpse of her person, and a few words caught

from her dulcet voice, acted on the inflammable feelings of Munoz, with a violence that was irresistible. No female had ever before created the slightest sensation in his mind, and a passion now burst forth on this insufficient excitement, like a volcano throwing out its self-engendered flames. He encouraged and fed this phrenzy even while he felt that it consumed him; and in the silence and solitude of his college, he had no one resource to turn the current of his diseased sensations. But he possessed, as well as Melchior, a great degree of that fine quality of sentiment, which irresistibly impels the lover to keep his secret to himself. Neither of them, therefore, made the other his confidant. Melchior was too much occupied with his mistress to discover Munoz's passion; but the latter found out, from various causes, that Melchior was the enamoured and accepted lover of the woman he adored. He had hopelessly, desperately, cherished this idolatry for a person he had never spoken to, and but once heard speak! But he was, even in his early youth, one of the most eccentric and incalculable of mortals—and this character he was now about to establish, by an extraordinary and unlooked for, but still consistent freak. Deterred by his circumstances and station in life from indulging the slightest degree of hope of obtaining the object of his extravagant passion, and making a wild and irrational estimate of friendship and the duties which he thought it imposed, he at once resolved to give up the notion of Malvide, and to remove any bar which his presence might by possibility create, to the progress of his friend's pursuit. Thus consoling himself for the imaginary relinquishment of a mistress whom he never knew, by the unreal security of a friendship, the advantages of which he was flinging away, he formed and put into execution the design of abandoning France, unknown to all, and absolutely, and at once, retiring from the world for ever.

He quitted the college without notice or preparation—and he did not even leave a letter for his friend Melchior, having too strict a regard for truth to conceal it had he written, and dreading the possible effect it might produce on his friend, and consequently on the friendship which he valued more than life. For his father, he left a letter expressive of his sudden but fixed determination to abandon the world; and he entered Spain and joined the pious possessors of one of its many convents, and soon became as wild an enthusiast in the mysteries of religion, as he had been an extravagant worshipper at the shrine of passion. All this was in accordance with his extraordinary character, and not wonderful in a boy of eighteen. Having gone through all preliminary forms, and thoroughly prepared himself for the career on which he was about to enter, he finally took the vows of his order, and became soon distinguished amongst his brethren for his deep piety, his lofty conceptions, his learning, and his medical skill. He devoted all his worldly thoughts to the perfect acquirement of the killing-or-curing art, and his celebrity soon spread beyond the walls of his retreat: and thus distinguished, in that little circle of renown he might have lived and died, had not the political events of his time inflamed his mind with a new excitement, and forced him from his obscurity into the agitated arena of revolutionary life.

Don Melchior, in the mean time, had gone through his noviciate as a military man, having been removed by his father to the college of St. Cyr, whence he started to join the regiment of cavalry to which he was appointed; but the rapid succession of political movements at that period, depriving France of her military chieftain and military character, our hero had but the experience of one short and disastrous campaign, that which began with the defeat of the Prussians at Fleurs, and ended with the overwhelming discomfiture of *their* conquerors at Water-

loo. Melchior fought in both battles, and in the intervening affair of Quatre-bras, and he acquired, on those days of desperate conflict, a feeling of respect for British valour and fortitude that almost amounted to adoration. Don Melchior was a true *liberal*. He inherited from his father the best principles of civil freedom, and he added a wide toleration of religious tenets that sprung from a spontaneous independence of mind. Heretic and papist were with him empty words. Conscience was the only tribunal he acknowledged in these matters; and he felt that a community of political interests might fairly and safely exist between men whose religious feelings were as widely separated as the poles. His mind was instinct with notions like these. They were confirmed by the general liberality of his military companions; and the licentiousness in which the latter indulged produced no effect on our hero, beyond teaching him its danger and exciting his disgust. He had entered the French service, because that of his own country was out of his reach, and because, educated in France, he spoke its language, and followed its manners and customs, like a native; but he felt himself still a Spaniard; and though possessing a hereditary attachment to Joseph and a contempt for Ferdinand, he burned with enthusiasm at the thoughts of those heroes who had expelled the former and now groaned under the latter; and he anxiously awaited the day when he might join the ranks of the patriots who abounded in Spain, and whose bosoms throbbed with the desire to set her free.

On the disbanding of the army of the Loire, our young soldier retired to his father's residence at Toulouse, and here he returned with new ardour to the indulgence of his passion for Malvide d'Euplandre. The lovers had regularly corresponded during Melchior's absence; and this short but perilous separation was all that had been wanting to rivet the

chains by which the young pair so willingly allowed themselves to be bound ; and for some weeks they revelled in the luxury of secret love. But the total change of circumstances in young Melchior's family, resulting from the ruin of Napoleon, made the avowal of this attachment then impossible. The pensions hitherto paid to the exiled Afrancesados were discontinued on the accession of Louis XVIII. ; and the consideration in which they had been held during the influence of Joseph was now replaced by every mark of distrust and detestation. The virulent hostility of the Spanish government was unbounded, and that of France showed but little wish to alleviate the sufferings of a body of men whom they *did* hate, and affected to despise.

Don Francisco and his sons felt neither a right nor an inclination to interfere in the politics of a country which afforded them shelter. The father, therefore, cautiously abstained from any public manifestation of his opinions ; and the three grown up brothers, including our hero, resolved to embark for South America, and there join the standard of independence, under which so many gallant exiles from old Spain were at that moment fighting. Melchior parted from Malvide, with proud sentiments of confidence in her, and that sanguine certainty of success which is the instinctive feeling that raises the ambitious man so much above the level of his kind.

Malvide had much of the heroine in her character. High-minded and tender-hearted, with a strong intellect and warm feelings, she loved her lover not less for his lofty aspirations than for the overflowing softness of sentiment by which they were tempered. She liked romantic incident and feeling—not that rapid, common place kind which sinks its votaries into languishment and affectation—but those spirited breaks in the equalities of action and thought, which give vigour to the mind and animation to the monotony of life. Her grief at parting with her lover

was much assuaged by the effect of this disposition ; and during three years of his adventurous career in the new world, her anxiety for his safety at once preyed upon and supported her spirit. She did not pine away during this agitating interval ; but her mind was centered in one object with an intensity that would have worn out an intellect less elastic than hers.

Melchior ran a rapid and brilliant career in Venezuela and other parts of South America where liberty was triumphant. His two brothers perished in the struggle, one in action with Morillo's troops, the other in a desperate sea engagement, in which he commanded a patriot sloop. These losses inflamed young Melchior's hatred to the cause of despotism and its agents ; and among other effusions of his highly excited mind, the following (which I thought worth translation) escaped him at this period.

### TO THE WARRIORS OF CHILI.

Rouse, Men of Freedom, for the fight  
In Freedom's majesty and might!

Let the sound of your march be sabres clashing,

Let your signal sign be the cannon flashing,

And your battle-cry " Our Right ! "

When furious to the field you rush,

Sweep on, as the herded wild-horse dashes

O'er the Pampas,\* trampled by his crush—

Be your charge like the tropic shower which splashes

So loud that the thunder's roar is hush,

Or seems as rolling faint and high,

A whirlwind of the upper sky!

Gaze on yon tempest-driven clouds ;

Shattered through Heaven's wide space they fly—

Thus let the Despots' servile crowds

Shrink from you, Sons of Liberty!

Think, as ye rush on the hireling hordes,

What cause ye serve when their bosoms bleed—

And know that each gleam from your brandished swords

Is a watchlight for a Nation freed!

\* The immense plains of waving grass which extend for nearly one thousand miles between the banks of the Plata and Chili, are called *Pampas* by the Spaniards.



Our hero became so distinguished for his intrepidity and talent, on several occasions, that he gained rapid promotion in the Colombian service, and was much noticed by Bolivar, who held out many inducements to him to identify himself by naturalization with the country he had so disinterestedly served. But no persuasion had one instant's influence with Melchior, whose whole thoughts turned towards his native country and the girl he loved. He had made a *name*, his great object in the perils and privations he had voluntarily encountered; and having aided in the establishment of liberty in America, he now prepared to return to Europe, certain of having acquired a claim upon the liberal feelings of Spain, and hoping to have established for himself an influence in the good opinion of the father of Malvide.

Full of these prospects, he took leave of the scene of his exploits and the companions of his glory; and embarking on board an English merchant ship, he arrived safely in London early in December 1819. During a stay of a few days there, he met several Spaniards, to whom his reputation was well known, and by one of those, an agent from Cadiz, he was initiated into the secret of the preparations for revolt, at that time on the point of completion in the army near that place, under the direction of Riego, Quiroga, and their companions. Don Melchior did not hesitate for a moment in the course to be pursued; but leaving London immediately, he proceeded to Falmouth, whence a packet was on the point of sailing for Gibraltar. A quick passage favoured his views, and from that fortress he passed safely across the frontier, and with strong letters of introduction from his London friends, he arrived at Las Cabezas de San Juan, Riego's quarters, on the last day of the year 1819. A hurried but animated and interesting conference took place between these gallant spirits, on the night of that day—and the next morning, the 1st of January 1820, the constitutional flag was un-

furled upon long suffering Spain, and liberty proclaimed.

Melchior, in the first instance, acted as a volunteer on Riego's staff, but in a few days he was placed in command of a portion of that hero's immortal little army; and he personally shared in all its harassing and dubious enterprises, until the final acceptance of the constitution by Ferdinand, and the triumphant establishment of freedom. Raised to the very pinnacle of delight by this rapid accomplishment of all his *public* hopes, the ardent mind of Don Melchior could imagine no possibility of failure in those private and personal views, to which he now thought he might in strictest duty turn his undivided attention. He obtained, through the influence of his gallant chief Riego, an appointment under the immediate command of Mina (who had recently returned from France, and was nominated Captain General of Navarre,) and he immediately repaired to the scene of his new duties. He obtained from Mina a short leave of absence, to pay a visit to his family and friends at the other side of the Pyrenees. He quickly passed the route between Pampeluna and Perpignan; and being now, as it were, within reach of all he loved, compared at least with the distances which had so lately separated them, his heart acknowledged the near approach to his immediate family: but he still felt as if half the globe intervened between him and the dearest object of his affections—and the last league he had to traverse in his rapid journey, seemed infinitely the longest since he left Colombia.

Malvide was apprised of her lover's approach, as she had been of all his movements since he returned to Europe, through the medium of Felix, a trusty servant of her father, almost her earliest playmate, and, since childhood up, her faithful ally, long in the confidence of herself and Don Melchior, and wholly devoted to their interest. By his contrivances a correspondence had been carried on for several years in perfect

secrecy and safety; and Melchior's last letter, two days before the one fixed for his arrival, gave the joyous news for which her heart had so long panted, and which now seemed too much for it to bear.

A hint dropped of an interesting event, is, I know, like seed sown upon that most fertile field, a reader's imagination. Is it not then enough for me to say that Melchior came, that Malvide received him, that their interview was as secret as it was holy—and will not a rich harvest of imaginings spontaneously spring up in every reader's mind? Will not all instantly recollect what passed, once at least in their lives, in their own individual cases?—and can it be necessary to enter into details of what the whole world knows by heart? In the present instance, at all events, I can give no minute particulars; for though I pressed both Melchior and Malvide to be very exact and communicative at this part of their story, they both assured me they *could* not, for they did not recollect a word that had passed at their meeting. They only remembered the gnawing, restless, enchanting wretchedness with which they awaited the appointed hour; the rapture which they respectively caught each other's figure in the moonlight grove by the river side; the beating of heart, and swimming of brain when they pronounced each other's name; and the delirious forgetfulness of all beside when they stood clasped in firm embrace.—Their only feeling was that nothing human could sever them; but Felix, ere long undeceived them, by rushing towards them, dragging them from each other's arms, forcibly carrying Don Melchior to the boat from which he had just landed, and leaving Malvide almost fainting on a bench, from which she was roused by her father himself, who had wandered out, thus *malàpropos*, to enjoy the beauties of the evening, and destroy a scene of extacy that was worth them all.

Fortunately no discovery attended this interrup-

tion. A succession of interviews gave the lovers time to calm their transports, and an interchange of ideas and opinions led to a more rational consideration of the measures which their mutual happiness required them to adopt. Melchior was received by his father and mother, his remaining brother, and two sisters, with all the feelings of pride and pleasure, excited by the happy return and honourable success of a son and brother; but dear as those greetings were, they were of very inferior import to those in another quarter, and I therefore leave them too to the reader's fancy, certain that it will not dwell upon them much longer than I do myself.

The Vicomte d'Euplandre, the father of Malvide, was glad to see his old favourite Melchior safely returned from his various exploits—but he had no interest in the exploits themselves, and was by no means pleased at the triumphant aspect of the cause, which our hero had entered into with such distinguished zeal. In fact the Vicomte had changed his political opinions. He had conveniently cast off his attachment to the Bonaparte family when fortune ceased to be on visiting terms with them; and being now a warm worshipper of the newly risen son of Bourbon prosperity, he discovered for every flagrant act of Ferdinand some excellent excuse, and in the noble conduct of the patriot liberators of Spain he saw nothing but the most atrocious guilt. He very shortly took occasion to inform Melchior of this, and gave him to understand that he would not be sorry to be freed from the danger of infection which lurked in every fold of his young friend's reputation, and which he dreaded might communicate itself to the very susceptible sympathy of his own countrymen. He therefore did every thing but recommend Melchior to hurry back to Spain; and gave him plainly, though not broadly, to understand, that *that* interview was to end their intercourse.

The shock which all this would have produced to

Melchior's sanguine mind was broken, in some measure, by the previous hints he had received from his own family of the Vicomte's change of opinions, or principles—or whatever else they might be conveniently and respectfully called. In the few minutes snatched from love and its immediate topics, the lovers discussed with condensed energy the course to be followed. It was mutually agreed that no abrupt declaration was to be made by Melchior. He was to wait awhile, until matters became consolidated in Spain, and the efforts which he was, with others, making to procure an amnesty for the exiled Afrancesados might enable his father to resume his former station in his own country, and entitle him to claim an alliance for his son with the daughter of the Vicomte, according to the cold and commercial forms of French marriages. Having thus arranged, and thus postponed, the open avowal of their mutual passion, the lovers once more separated, confident in the reciprocal attachment which they felt that nothing could now shake, and scarcely less certain of the eventual happiness of which they *would* not entertain a doubt.

The year 1820 trailed slowly on, according to the estimate of the lovers; and flew fast away, in the opinion of those whose hopes for the good of Spain led them to look to a favourable adjustment of her many difficulties. The clash of her parties was echoed beyond her frontiers, and the discontent of her former despot found sympathy in the feelings of those who thought his debasement might lead to their own. The liberal patriots of Spain had to combat against a host of besetting evils, and they found full employment in endeavouring to avert, or prepare for the dangers which they saw in perspective. The army was strengthened as much as was consistent with the means of the state, and our hero, with the other military officers of distinction, was incessantly employed in the formation of the new levies. He

had sufficient interest to keep his place near the frontiers, and he there contrived through the agency of Felix, the only confidant of his amour, to keep up a constant correspondence with Malvide. Fatigued not less by his military occupations than by the harassing anxieties of hope deferred, an old wound received in South America caused him considerable annoyance, and he was ordered to the Baths of Barège, on the French side of the Pyrenees, the sovereign remedy for injuries of the nature of that under which he suffered. The summer of 1821 saw him fairly established there—not so much for considerations of health as for those of happiness; for Malvide had persuaded her father to consent to the family passing the season at Bagnères, that delightful residence for all who would see nature in its loveliest aspects, and be within reach of its most wild and bold varieties.

In the paths of this romantic region Malvide and Melchior once more revived the oft-breathed vows of eternal fidelity; and every auxiliary of time and place added to the picturesque enthusiasm of their attachment. The father, unsuspecting to the very last of the extent of their intimacy, threw no obstruction in their way. He could not reasonably decline the visits of his old friend's son on the ground of political opinions, for nothing hostile had yet broken out between their respective nations, and it was only on those grounds that he wished to withdraw from the acquaintance. Don Francisco, with the remainder of his family, had in the mean time returned to Spain, in virtue of the permission tardily granted by the liberal government—liberal, in every thing, to the utmost extent of their powers, except in their intolerant treatment of the Afrancesados, which formed a deep stain on the general purity of their measures. These long persecuted men were at length allowed to enter Spain, but the permission was joined with indignities which nothing but the inherent love of country could have prompted them to sub-

mit to. They were declared to have forfeited all their honorary distinctions and rank, and to be unworthy of future employment in the service of that land, for whose good they had laboured and suffered so much. Harsh terms, but still accepted by many, who, with feelings of true patriotism, acknowledged insult and injury to be more than atoned for by the privilege of once more treading their native soil, and of laying their bones beneath it.

During daily excursions to all points of interest in the scenes around them, Melchior and Malvide became thoroughly intimate with the most retired and secret recesses of the mountains; and the rude inhabitants were often the objects of their bounty. Among others, the wretched Cagots excited at first their curiosity, next their compassion; and a chance shelter, taken during a sudden storm at the hut, with which my readers are already well acquainted, ended in many acts of kindness to the poor old couple who owned it, from her who was afterwards to become its heroine—and *mine*.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

ANOTHER separation came, another absence, a renewed correspondence—and again a meeting, under circumstances of unusual, and, I may say, of most romantic interest. Frequently, during their summer sojourn in the Pyrenees, did Melchior, in all the vehemence of his affection, implore Malvide's consent to his demanding her formally of her parents; and on her strenuous representations of the certain denial which would bring ruin on their dearest hopes, he used to urge, with the eloquence of passionate entreaty, a private marriage, to put refusal of its legal

confirmation beyond the power of parents, proud of their own honour, and feeling it compromised in that of their child. But this latter proposition was more repugnant to Malvide's principles than the former seemed dangerous to her passion for Melchior. I must not enter into a detail of the motives which induced her decidedly to object to this clandestine marriage, or of the arguments by which her lover hoped to enforce his proposal. It was enough that she viewed such a step with the feelings of horror common to all French females of family and condition, and she vowed that she never would consent to this measure of desperation until driven to the very last extremity. She was firm; he submitted perforce; and he was soon with his troops in Catalonia, and she at her father's château in Languedoc. There another winter and another spring "dragged their slow length along;" and in sure succession came the summer of 1822, which was destined to bring about the catastrophe of the chequered drama, in which Melchior and Malvide had still to sustain so great a share of anxiety and agitation.

It was in the course of that summer, while thick coming events threw doubt and danger over every hope for Spanish happiness, and filled with a thousand inquietudes the breasts of the lovers, that Malvide's father, with an abruptness more peremptory than parental, informed her of a proposal of marriage, her acceptance of which he considered quite a matter of course.

The match was, in the common acceptation of terms, unexceptionable. The suitor was young, wealthy, of good family, and good character. Malvide acknowledged all this, but she frankly told her father and mother that she would rather die than accept this lover, because a feeling worse than death was coupled with the thought of such a union. This refusal was inexplicable to the astonished parents, for they, with that short-sightedness of which one finds



instances every day, had no suspicion of their daughter's secret attachment, and she dared not bring herself to confess it, even now.

A scene of too common occurrence ensued, and a series of sad consequences were the result ; severity on the part of the parents—useless entreaty on that of the daughter—tears and threats, prayers and persecution. Force could not in those days be attempted against the inclinations of the unhappy girl ; but, dear as she was to her parents, a train of unpremeditated, yet torturing unkindness was the result of their wounded pride and disappointed hopes. Parents are certainly sometimes to be pitied on these occasions, but never more so than when they bring on their own and their children's suffering by a false estimate of the authority and the obedience, which, duly balanced, should form the happiness of all. In the present case, I can, however, give no sympathy but to my heroine ; but I confess myself not an unprejudiced person—and I hope my readers will be all biassed the same way as I was, for I wish them not only to excuse but to admire the whole conduct of Malvide.

Her character was now put to the test. The whole host of opposing passions and sentiments were aroused. Instinct and feeling—reason, reflection, love, duty, were all fermenting in her mind, with a force that would have been fatal to intellect as well as happiness, had she not by a bold exertion decided on the course to be pursued, with a vigour suited only to a desperate case ; but which in such as her's I should be glad to see adopted as a precedent. There is a line of demarcation between submission and resistance. It exists for children as well as nations ; and parental no more than political obedience can be expected to go further. This line is no doubt fine-drawn, and sometimes difficult to distinguish.—It twists and serpentines, too, according to circumstances and character ;—and in fact the tracing of it

must be left to that discriminating tact, that prompt sense of what is right, which is clear in seeing, and quick in doing. My heroine possessed, in my opinion, that ready sensitiveness in an eminent degree. Acting upon it, she let her submission to her parents go its full extent. She acknowledged their right to suggest a husband to her—but not to dictate one.—She admitted their privilege of rejecting her choice—but not *such* a choice as Melchior. Reason and sentiment combined to convince her that *he* was out of the pale of her parent's jurisdiction—and her mind was made up to act at last on that conviction. Firmly bearing up against all the points of petty tyranny in which her father and mother vented their feelings of wounded pride and disappointed expectation, she even endured the torture of a detested suitor's persecuting endearments, while her heart was torn by anxiety for her lover's dangerous situation, for the leagued bands of bigotry had begun to assume an attitude of offence, and several warm actions had been fought between them and the patriots. Malvide saw that the crisis of her fate, her character, and her happiness had arrived—and she acted with a prudence befitting such a time. She wrote to Melchior, detailing her situation, her feelings, and her determination. She announced her intention of confessing their attachment to her parents, of soliciting the consent which she had still no hope of their granting; and in case of their refusal, she declared her resolution of setting off, at all hazards to her personal safety or to her fame, to throw herself under the only protection which she would thenceforth acknowledge as legitimate or legal. She pointed out the Cagot's hut, as the place of rendezvous, and the safest shelter that circumstances would admit of; and she fixed a day for her arrival there, either accompanied by her father, and sanctioned by his consent to their union, or alone, and resolved to join her fate irrevocably with his.

A fine night favoured our heroine, and no accident betrayed her. Supported on the arm of Felix, she safely passed through the lawns and woods, and reached the river side. There a boat awaited her, the same which had carried Melchior to her longing arms, on the secret visit which I have already mentioned. As she stepped over the side and took her seat in the little skiff, the memory of that delicious meeting rose upon her mind, and overpowered the sorrow which was stealing upon her, at every step which took her from the scenes of her youth. But now, revived and re-assured, she would not suffer another retrospection to interfere with the forward movement of her thoughts—she would look back no more. A league from the opposite side of the river she safely met the Bayonne Diligence in which her place was secured. There she took leave of Felix, and stepped into the crowded carriage, where she had to commence her series of masquerade concealments in a mood but little suited for the practice of such antics. She protested to me, during her recital of events, that nothing connected with her stolen journey equalled, in irksomeness, if not in actual suffering, the necessity of supporting her assumed character, of talking *patois* to her fellow travellers, and falsely answering all their inquisitive demands as to her birth, parentage, and connexions.

Quitting the Diligence at Lourdes, she proceeded on foot, following the windings of the Gave, skirted Pierrefitte; slept in a cottage inn at Luz, and continued the course of the valley of Barrèges till she reached Gedro, whence she struck off, by the route I took afterwards, into the valley of Héas, and thence into that of Estaubé, where she soon discovered the Cagot's hut, that bourne of the long-sought security, to attain which she had suffered so much.

But on approaching this place of rendezvous, a thousand heretofore unknown emotions rushed upon

her. The whole force of every feminine feeling seemed to assail, instead of assisting her. The wild anxiety to clasp her lover in her arms, which had hitherto urged her on—the longing desire to pour out into his bosom the flood of her secret thoughts—all this seemed checked at once; and she felt an oppression of spirits, a stagnation of feeling, instead of the buoyant delight which had, up till then, supported her. She feared she had gone too far—that delicacy was violated as duty had been defied—and that, instead of the fond embrace of an enraptured lover, she might have to encounter the chill triumph of a contemptuous conqueror. It was thus she was tortured by the cruel fears which woman is the heir to, which make her doubt the generous hearts that love her best for every step the world calls weakness, and value her the most when she considers herself of least price. There may be men—and women do well perhaps to cherish the belief—who despise the beings that doat on them, but still there are *few* such; and Melchior and his like were none of them. Malvide would have felt this too, confidently and proudly, had not that passing shade of female distrust—distrust of herself rather than him—discoloured the truth awhile, and thrown an uncertain hue upon the perspective which she was yet destined to enjoy.

She trembled as she gazed on the hut to which her limbs seemed to refuse to bear her. Once, in the conflict of feeling, which oppressed her, and almost bent her to the earth, she resolved to abandon her intention and return home. But an undefinable pang accompanied the thought, that seemed to carry despair in its suggestion. She started forward on her path, and, as if she had been flying from all the combined evils of life, she hurried up to the well known door of the hut. At every step she expected to meet Melchior, and she shuddered with terror each instant lest he might appear. Arrived at the

threshold she paused once more, and she felt a faintness come across her brow. She hastily knocked, and at the same moment she raised the latch ; and, tottering into the room, she sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands, in terror of the encounter she so dreaded, yet so longed for.

It was evening. The old Cagot couple were at their meals of *cruchade*. Surprised at the abrupt entrance of a female, dressed in the costume of the district, but still a stranger, they both for a moment paused. The old man, however, carelessly resumed his occupation, while his more active and more beneficent helpmate rose and approached the agitated girl.

Malvide answered her first kind words by an inquiring stare around the chamber ; and when the old woman really recognised her, and gave expression to her astonishment and pleasure, she quickly asked if Melchoir were there ? Being answered in the negative, she exclaimed, "Thank God ! thank God !" and a flood of tears gave relief to her heart, which seemed strained to bursting.

The kind hearted old woman had not sufficient of that tormenting intelligence which just sees enough into one's sorrows to make it wish to pry deeper. She only perceived that the young lady wept ; she did not inquire nor care for the cause, but confined her efforts to lessen the effect. She was just dull enough to know that that is best done by leaving the disease to its own cure ; and a few minutes proved the justice of her calculation, by Malvide's recovered composure, a weight of woe having apparently been heaved from her breast.

But this unnatural respite did not continue long. A sudden shock came across her mind once more, in the thought that his absence might be caused by displeasure at the bold step she had taken—by danger—by death even—and she shook in every joint while the last horrid conjecture seemed to freeze her

heart. She summoned strength enough to inquire from the old woman if her lover had not been at the hut, or had sent no messenger? The chilling negatives that answered these anxious questions completed her wretchedness. She now felt indeed forlorn, and almost abandoned. If Melchior were indeed then ill—a prisoner—wounded! Such were alone the frightful probabilities her fancy conjured up; for, after a moment's thought, she would not, could not suffer the degrading notion of his abandonment of her to linger in her brain, and to believe *him* dead, was to her worse than death. Every feeling of self was then forgotten, and her only considerations were given for his safety.

This was a night of unmitigated misery to our poor heroine.—The grateful old mistress of the hut did all she could to alleviate her distress. The spare room, always ready for the chance guests which adventure might bring there, was put into its best trim. Malvide had experienced its shelter before, and she reckoned on finding enough for her wants; but as things were, accommodation more indifferent still would have amply suited her desires. She scarcely felt the texture of the bed she pressed, and seemed alive only to sensations of mental suffering. Her first rational determination was to write immediately to Felix. She had promised him to do so, when anticipating different results to what she now thought her too hasty journey; and she sat down to redeem her pledge to her faithful assistant, so agonized as to be scarcely comprehensible. Enough was, however, said to explain the distress, and intimate the possible peril of her situation; and the letter was despatched by day-break, in the care of the old woman, who undertook to forward it from Gedro to the post town of St. Sauveur; and at the same time she promised to procure a safe messenger with a horse to cross the mountain paths to Bagnères de Luchon for the little trunk, for the receipt of which our poor

heroine, under the signature of Jacqueline l'Heureux, gave a proper authorization.

These matters arranged, Malvide felt something less miserable. There is, even in anxiety like her's, a relief unspeakable in the bare effort at exertion, a remedy for distress, which the sluggish half of mankind does not comprehend. Malvide having done all that depended upon her, had only to endure the lingering torments of suspense for full five days, from the time her letter to Felix was despatched, until the hour when that devoted fellow presented himself at the door of the hut, habited in the grotesque disguise, borrowed or bought from some disgarnished pilgrim, at which I myself soon afterwards stared.

His young mistress's delight may be imagined, by those who can have pictured the anguish of her solitary state. Felix was nearly as much rejoiced, in being the means of relieving her agitation. Almost without a word of inquiry or salutation, and waiving all those ceremonious preparations, which less practised and less considerate confidants delight in, he put a letter into Malvide's hand. To break the seal, almost devour the contents with her eyes, and next the paper with kisses, was the work of a minute; for the letter was a short one, and from Melchior. It was scrawled hurriedly, at the very moment of a victory over the Baron D'Eroles and his fanatics; but it said enough in one or two lines to stamp it, in Malvide's regard, as the most precious epistle she had ever received, even from Melchior. It told that he was safe—that he was *her's* as ever—and that he had not received the letter she had so faithfully promised, and he so ardently looked for. Here then was the whole mystery of his non-appearance plainly cleared up, and in a way so simple, that a hysteric laugh burst from the delighted girl, at her own expense. In all the conjectures of her miserable incertitude, the easiest, the most natural of all, had

never crossed her mind : her all important epistle had mis-carried ; and to that moment her lover was in utter ignorance of her situation, and of her close neighbourhood to him, for he was only a few leagues distant across the mountain frontier.

Malvide very soon found time to inquire with anxious solicitude for her parents, whose sufferings she imagined and deeply felt for. Felix gave a trite, but feeling description of their emotion and affright, when it was discovered that Malvide had fled—the tears and lamentations of the mother, mixed with reproaches to the cruel father, who drove her daughter to despair—the half stifled misery of the proud and cold blooded Vicomte—the alarm of the servants—and the agitation of the discarded lover. Felix declared, that though he scarcely pitied any one of the chief trio, he could hardly restrain his tears, when, as a last desperate hope of discovery, the Vicomte ordered the river to be dragged ; and tottered, pale and trembling, himself into the first boat, while the worn out mother sank fainting on the bank.

At this part of his recital Malvide wrung her hands, and wept bitterly, at the thought of the misery which these unwise parents had made her the means of inflicting on them. But then came Felix's account of *his own* sufferings, when the receipt of her and Don Melchior's letter, enclosing one for her, told him of their double disappointment, and of her destitute state. Then without a moment's delay, he resolved to set out to join her, and to go at all risks into Spain, and bring Don Melchior to her. He did not tell exactly this extent of his intentions to his old master and mistress, but he swore to them that he would set out in search of their daughter, and that he would never return without tidings of her. His preparations were soon made. He took care secretly to forward a guitar, and some little portable luxuries, for Malvide ; and providing himself with



the before-noticed apt disguise for frontier travelling in such times, furnished with a passport, and more money than he could require, he set off, and journeyed night and day, until he arrived at the Cagot's hut, and threw himself—not unexpectedly, for she reckoned on his zeal—before his delighted and agitated mistress.

It may be well supposed that Felix did not linger long in the hut. Even had his own inclination prompted any loss of time, the exigency of the case would have overcome it. But he was anxious to be gone, for he was a fellow of an adventurous spirit; he longed to mix in the strange company, to be looked for at the other side of the hills; and he felt proudly anxious to signalize himself in the service of his attached mistress, and of the gallant lover with whom her destinies were now for ever to be joined. A little time served for his scanty preparations—a hearty meal, a few hours repose, his relics and amulets put in proper order, his false beard replaced on his chin, and his staff grasped firmly in his hand—and away he trudged across the mountains, followed by Matvide's anxious looks, which seemed to out-pace his steps, and would have penetrated the secrets of distance and time.

The adventures of Felix on this expedition, would have formed one of the most amusing of modern pilgrimages, had I room for such an episode. But I must slur over his meetings with the various curious characters which at that time abounded in Spain; the accidents which for many days retarded his main object; his falling in with Father Munoz, whom he immediately recognised as Don Melchior's old friend; and his rencontre with the villain Sanchez, who, in his presence, and deceived by his professed opinions, avowed to the monk his intention of murdering Don Melchior, and set out for his quarters, under a treacherous semblance of patriotism, to effect his purpose. To prevent it, however, two obstacles were in the

way—Father Munoz's and Felix's disapproval. The strange circumstances of this gratuitous villany revived all the old warmth of the monk's attachment ; and he immediately despatched Felix, furnished with passes of security against the outrages of the Royalist bands, to outmarch the intended assassin, and put Don Melchior on his guard. He entered fully into Felix's confidence, who told him not only of the continued attachment of his old friend for Malvide, but entrusted him with the secret of her present retreat, certain that, in the result of any accident to Don Melchior, the Monk would use all his powerful influence for her protection. Felix little knew the chord he touched on, when he sounded the praises of Malvide ; and the only return asked by Father Munoz, for his solemn promises of protection to that dear object, was a profound secrecy, as to his having been informed of her circumstances and situation.

Felix thought that was the least return he could make for so important a protection, and being discreet as well as zealous, he never violated his promises to the monk ; and neither Melchior nor Malvide, knew the guardian that protected the latter, during a lawless and hazardous interval, until Father Munoz informed his friend of the fact, and allowed me an opportunity for knowing, how far I too had shared in the safety secured to the hut, by his peremptory orders for its inviolability.

The marches and countermarches perpetually employing Don Melchior and his fellow pursuers of the fugitive fanatics, made it a difficult matter for the pretended pilgrim to come into actual contact with him. The object was at last attained. He found Don Melchior ; warned him of the projected attempt against his life ; informed him of the situation of her, for whom alone he thought that life worth preserving ; and bearing a hasty but eloquent letter from the gallant soldier to his faithful mistress, with instructions for the formation of a miniature telegraph,

and signals for its use, Felix once more bent his steps towards the secret hold of the lovers, and never paused in his career, until the very evening when I so unexpectedly formed one of the party among whom he alighted.

The march of circumstances from that moment has been, I hope, as clearly as it was truly traced. I have made my recital of previous transactions bear mainly on points of immediate interest to my heroine. Any oversight in those little dovetailings, which make a narrative more perfect, will be readily dispensed with for the entertainment of my straightforward object, of coming quickly to the situation of chief importance, in what I have chosen to denominate, like the rest, *a tale*. And I now resume the narrative of events, at the place where I again became an actual observer of them; feeling all the relief, which one naturally experiences in getting rid of a second-hand story, and having only to deal with such facts, as one can vouch for on one's own authority.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

THE general reader can scarcely imagine the hesitation with which writers record events arising from, or connected with their personal adventures. Every occurrence out of the common track has an air of fiction or improbability, and every character at all uncommon, is considered out of nature. But a little reflection would remove many of those impressions. The very facts that *on paper* always look so unreal, are in every day life perpetually happening around us; and many a scene performed by our own circle, or in which we take a part, only want to be printed, to make them pass the bounds of belief. The fact

is, that it is the fewness of those varied passages of life which are recorded, that gives to them this apocryphal air. Were a thousandth part of the *living* romances of the time to be given to the world, those inventions which have staggered credulity, would be pronounced tame and insipid, and all would declare what every one can vouch for from his own experience, that *romance* is the mere common place of life, and, like some of the general phenomena of nature, is incredible only to those who do not examine into that which forms the very essence of their own being.

I have been led to say this much, from the rather singular nature of the circumstances which combined to give a tone of what may be considered the marvellous, to the situations in which fate had placed the chief personages connected with the story I am telling. Both the persons and the events are certainly somewhat out of the track of ordinary affairs, and it is of course for that reason, I have chosen to record them here; but I trust that my readers will not return to their actual presence now, with the less sympathy, for knowing that they were subject to the same kind of influences, which have most probably, some time or other, chequered the life of every individual reader, who may cast a line of thought into the fathomless depths of memory.

Don Melchior, it will be recollected, was fast recovering from his wound, under the skill of the monk, and the attention of Malvide. The particulars of their by-gone days which I have sketched, were gleaned chiefly during the interval between the attempted murder of my hero and his convalescence. When Malvide acquired, in the certainty of her lover's safety, a little portion of her natural gaiety, she used often to revert to the strange circumstances of her Cagot disguise, and the semblance of half-idiocy and deformity, which she was forced to wear; to her early fears of my being leagued in some way

with her friends or Melchior's enemies; to her recovered confidence, and again recurring apprehensions on the visit of Serjeant Passepartout, and the murderer—from the mention of whom she shrunk. As for me, I at times doubted the identity of the person who now conversed with me so freely. I felt often as if something was wanting to the reality of the scene; as if the hut was but half furnished with its stock of mortal moveables, and that the limping, hooded, and fancied ugly girl *should* be there, to make all real and right. More than once did Malvide gratify my somewhat sceptical anxiety, by arranging her capulet as she was wont to do in her disguise, and sportively mimicking *her own* voice and gesture—and I have been startled, while she limped before me, as though I gazed on the accurate likeness of some well known but unpleasing object. Her hood thrown aside, and her beauteous face beaming out, I was again both satisfied and contented as to her identity.

Nothing could exceed Melchior's surprise, at the free avowal which Father Munoz made to him of the cause of his mysterious disappearance and temporary abandonment of the world. He could scarcely credit the possibility of his friend's boyish passion for Malvide; and still more did it appear impossible that it could yet linger in the breast which had undergone such thorough revolutions of passion and feeling, such total change of sentiment, and which now beat with emotions so wide of that one. If even Melchoir was sceptical on a point which involved deep adoration for the object of his own idolatry, well might my readers be so—but they will perhaps admit the strong hold taken of the heart by a first passion, and acknowledge, with a conscious sigh, the spell it casts over the mind, which new scenes, new sentiments, new fortunes, new worlds cannot dissolve.

Malvide was still more astonished at this revela-

tion, which it was absolutely necessary to convey to her, to account for the monk's repugnance to another meeting with her. Her incredulity, however, can be believed by those who comprehend the delicate texture of a truly modest mind, conscious of its purity, but ignorant of its worth. When she was at length convinced by the solemn assurances of her lover, strengthened by my poor confirmation, of the real nature of Father Munoz's feelings, she fled from almost the sound of his name : so little was she gratified at this triumphant proof of her external charms, and so still less desirous of confirming it by a display of her mental excellence.

But notwithstanding all this mutual motive for avoidance, Malvide and the monk were about to have one meeting by their joint consent, and one of a nature fit to shake to the very foundation the structure of self-denial which *he* at least had been raising.

Don Melchior, on the very first day of his being sufficiently recovered to move out of the hut, and with all the delicacy which the subject required, told Father Munoz of his and Malvide's anxious desire that a marriage should be immediately solemnized between them, such as would bind them by religious contract, although under present circumstances no legal ceremony could possibly take place. The delicacy of Malvide's situation, or, as *she* felt it, the indelicacy, inevitable as it was, made this step imperative ; and it became the more urgent, from the fears of both herself and Melchior, that were not such a bar thrown in the way, the obstinate parents might discover their retreat, and at any moment tear them asunder. Once, however, joined together by the ties of religion, they would possess a guarantee for safety that no resentment would venture to violate. Malvide might without reproach or scandal, devote herself to her sacred duties towards him, who would be then in the sight of heaven her *own*—

"Why, what's the matter?" said I; "you are not ill, I hope?"

"No—nothing—never mind—not at all ill—" answered he, with averted face—"not *ill*, but *sacre peste!* these fellows have no right to sport with one's feelings in this way!"

"Who? What? Pray explain," said I, anxiously.

"I *can't* explain," replied he—"don't you see I can't? Curse this sensibility of mine, it plays the very devil with a man's comfort—but then, the women like it"—added he, looking full in my face, with a brisk and smirking expression on his; "they like it, depend upon it they do; and this very fellow, this Racine here, with all his poetry, could not make his way faster to a female heart by writing his verses, than I could by weeping over them. Yes, I am not at all ashamed of it; I have cried myself sick, (blowing his nose fiercely) ay, quite sick of the sorrows of this dear Iphigenie (taking up the book,) and my tears dry up again as if a furnace blew its blasts over them: such is my indignation at the cruel brute of a father who would have sacrificed her. And as to that Achilles, my own namesake, a brave soldier though, we must allow that, he'd have fought the devil to give him his due; but if he had had a friend like me in all Aulide, he'd have carried the girl off, in spite of every impediment, and I'd have helped him! Ay, may I perish if I would not have married them myself!"

I could scarcely avoid taking off my hat, and making a low bow to the memory of Racine, for having so opportunely worked up the feelings of the serjeant, to suit the very purpose I had in hand. I saw that he was in the vein, and I lost no time in coming to the point. A very few words sufficed to state the object of my visit, and in a fewer still he gave his delighted consent to perform the part assigned him,

winding up with a prayer for the happiness of the intended bride, as fervent as if he had been her father a thousand times over.

I returned soon to the hut, recounted the success of my application, helped my friends to a laugh on the strength of the serjeant's heroics, and employed the rest of the evening in preparing the "order of the procession" for the morrow.

The morrow came, and a bright sky and clear atmosphere smiled propitiously on the day. Don Melchior felt a whole month's amendment to have resulted from the happy feelings of one night. He arose early, assisted by his faithful soldier servant, who with one of his comrades formed the whole *suite* of the late commander of so many hundreds. He was cheerful and looked well, and Malvide was a living emblem of the best feelings of the mind acting on an enlarged and lofty spirit: her bearing was suited to the importance of the day. She looked conscious of the serious station she occupied; but the tender sentiments which filled her heart, gave her an air of blended dignity and softness, which was at once striking and soothing. I, accompanied by the monk, arrived early at the hut from Gedro; Serjeant Passepartout, with four of his men, soon joined us, and after the form of breakfasting was gone through by the chief actors in this scene, we prepared for our descent into the valley where the chapel stood.

Father Munoz abstained from entering the hut, or having the gratification of speaking to his friend, so scrupulously did he avoid the possibility of meeting with Malvide, until on the steps of the altar, he might safely trust his eyes with the sight of those matured and cultivated charms, which in their very opening had so inflamed his youthful mind, and even in his late unexpected meeting with them, while shrouded in the semblance of death itself, had shaken his heart to its inmost depths. He therefore linger-



ed at the foot of the hill, in sight of the hut, and ready to precede our advance as soon as we set out.

In a very little time we were on our march. Don Melchior lay on a kind of couch, composed of mattresses and bolsters, placed on branches of pine, and carried at arm's length by Serjeant Passepartout's kind-hearted soldiers, who were relieved at intervals by Don Melchior's servant and his comrade. The narrowness of the paths made it impossible for Malvide to walk beside her lover, as she two or three times attempted; but she followed close to his litter, leaning on my arm; while Serjeant Passepartout, with a solicitude at once respectful and *paternal*, kept as close to her as possible, with an expression of fatherly importance and gravity on his countenance, quite suited to the solemnity of the office he was prepared to fulfil.

Descending at a gentle yet steady pace, and only halting occasionally for a few minutes to rest the bearers, we soon reached the level ground of the valley, and led by the monk, we arrived at the ponderous rock,\* which I have before noticed, and there following the example of our holy guide, a short pause was made, and all the party knelt—those who felt it a duty—saying a short prayer to the Virgin, (who, as tradition testifies, once honoured this rock by her appearance upon it) and such of us as were sceptical, going through the ceremony from courtesy to our companions.

Once more in movement, the chapel of our Lady of Héas soon appeared to us situated in the oval depth of the circus which terminates the valley. The desolate majesty of this temple is amazingly impressive. Encircled by abrupt and barren mountains, it stands in its solitude, as a type of religion amidst the desert asperities of the mind; and softening by its benignant influence the rude sublimities of

\* This rock measures nearly 2,000 cubit feet.

nature. The situation of this elegant structure in the midst of chaotic creation, brings the contrast of nature and art more home to the mind than any illustration I have ever witnessed—and had I not matter to dwell on, pregnant with greater interest to me, I might add some of my own vague reveries on the subject of poetical susceptibility, to the vapoury speculations which the subject has already drawn forth.

A group of three or four men was standing at the porch of the chapel when it broke upon our sight, but on the approach of Father Munoz they retired into it, and the entire of our party soon reached the entrance. I was too much occupied with the observation of Malvide and Melchior, to pay a minute attention to the surrounding scenery. It made, however, a strong impression upon me, as bearing an aspect of most uncompromising savageness. The hollowed entrance of the amphitheatre showed the dried up bed of a lake, which, formed two centuries back by the bursting of a torrent, was, about forty years since, by a new phenomenon, swept dry at once, its waters rushing from it with terrific speed, and ravaging the valley as they forced their way along. When I looked around me in search of some spot of verdure, I only saw a scanty patch of herbage-ground, here and there among the crags, and even these showed the traces of a hail-storm of unusual fury, that had a fortnight before seared the fair face of vegetation, and scarcely left its vestige on the land. I turned from all this to the contemplation of the lover's sun-bright looks; but I felt, on entering the chapel, a spell of I knew not what oppression, which I in vain endeavoured to shake off.

The first objects that struck me within were not of a nature to lessen this feeling. Above twenty of the straggling vagabonds of "The Faith," were scattered in the church, leaning against the pillars, or lounging near the altar. Don Melchior and my-

self exchanged electrical looks, and at the next instant both our eyes turned on Malvide who suddenly became the colour of death. A hurried glance showed me Passepartout's countenance, and it spoke displeased astonishment—but when my gaze fixed on the monk, as he stood with his back to the altar, I saw a calm and proud enthusiasm beaming from his face.

“’Tis nothing but chance,” said I to Melchior and Malvide; “this is the natural refuge of those fanatics in their idle hours—be assured ’tis nothing of design.”

Melchior shook his head, dissatisfied—but he pressed Malvide's hand fondly between his, and she smiled and recovered the natural colouring of her cheeks. The litter was now laid down, Melchior stood up from it, and leaning on my arm he walked up the aisle; and when we reached the altar steps, he knelt upon them and leaned against the railing for support. Malvide was close beside him; Serjeant Passepartout stood up erect, as though on parade; and I with the French soldiers occupied a place at a respectful distance from the rest. Melchior's Spanish attendants stood like sentinels outside the chapel, and the soldiers of the Faith seemed carelessly to occupy themselves as before, regarding the rude representations of miracles and portraits of saints, daubed by some rustic artist on the walls.

I felt a delicacy that forbade me to pay too strict an attention to rites in which I might have been considered, in a sectarian point of view, to have no sympathy. I therefore neither looked nor listened too minutely, contenting myself with a passing glance of admiration at Malvide, whose simple robe of white muslin, fastened closely round her neck, assorted chastely with the ungarnished ringlets of her hair, and the natural blushes of her cheeks. From this lovely object my eyes wandered to the splendours of the altar, and its four richly wreathed co-

lums, in the oval cavity behind which was enshrined the suspended figure of the Virgin herself, in all the holiness of paint and gilding, surrounded by angels of equal dignity ; while the dove-like emblem of the spirit of life surmounted all, in clouds of pink and blue. Two minor altars flanked this principal one, and were severally decorated with pictorial anticipations of purgatory and the last judgment, in each of which the gross imagination of the artist had embodied the most revolting notions of bigotry and blasphemy. Such are the disfiguring mockeries that degrade this beautiful temple, and stifle the pure breathings of religion in their spurious atmosphere.

The monk had for some minutes spoken in a solemn tone—I know not in what form of words—and I saw that Melchior and Malvide were preparing to reply ; but before either could utter a response, or speak the words that were to bind them together for life, Don Melchior's Spanish servant rushed into the chapel, and with unreverential haste proceeded up the aisle. The monk looked, as I thought, astonished ; and both Melchior and Malvide started up from their kneeling position, and listened eagerly to some whispered communication from the servant. Don Melchior looked surprise personified, while Malvide clasped her hands, as if delight was mixed with her wonder.

A bustle at the church door excited my attention ; and looking in that direction, I perceived two of the inelegant sedan-chairs of the country, used for the conveyance of delicate or ailing admirers of the picturesque ; out of which an elderly gentleman and lady were coming. But a figure, rather incongruous to the solemn scene and its romantic associations, particularly struck me. This was a spruce, powdered, laced, and liveried lacquey, in that overdone grotesque costume which is so common, even now, amongst the old nobility of France. This fellow came capering up the aisle, with an air and smile

that I thought familiar to me—but I was soon put out of doubt as to my imperfect recollection of him, by Malvide springing forward to meet him, with a frank and cordial manner, exclaiming, “Felix! Is it then you, indeed? And can it be possible that what I hear is the truth?”

“Yes, my dear Mademoiselle, that it is, if my worthy friend here, Antonio, understood my mumbling, and told you that the Vicomte and Madame are come to give you away.”

Here the confused surprise of Malvide and Melchior was completed by the entrance of the Vicomte and Vicomtesse d'Euplandre. As they advanced into the church, a young man of simple mien, who accompanied them to the door, retired almost unperceived except by me; and I observed him to mount a horse which was held by an attendant, and gallop away at full speed.

In a moment Malvide was clasped in her mother's arms, from which she withdrew awhile, only to fly into her father's less cordial embrace. A scene of brief but most important explanation ensued, to lead to which it is necessary shortly to state the results of Felix's return to his master's château, after the night on which I made his acquaintance, and of his departure from the Cagot's hut, accompanied by his quondam associate, the vile Sanchez.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

No sooner did the news of Felix's return to the château penetrate into the Vicomte's study and his wife's *boudoir*, than they both came out to meet the

long expected messenger. There was an air of broken pride about the father, as if the disgrace rather than the loss of his child was most thought of. The mother bore all the evidence of sleepless nights and days passed in weeping.

Felix's first exclamation was, "She is safe!" and, without a word of reply to the rapid questions which assailed him, he produced Malvide's epistle to her parents, the rough sketch of which had caught my attention as it lay on the table in the Cagot's hut. In this letter she avowed the step she had taken, in language of affectionate respect to those to whom she owed her being, but of firm devotion to him who now owned her first allegiance; she did not discover the place of her concealment, but expressed her anxiety to do so when she should receive an assurance that her parents would sanction her choice by their consent, and sanctify her nuptials by their blessing.

The unbounded joy of her mother on seeing the certificate of Malvide's existence, and having her safety confirmed by the assurance of Felix, led her into a hundred absurd but natural displays. The first feeling of her heart was delighted consent to Malvide's union with Melchior; and she urged her husband to set off immediately with her, guided by Felix, to fulfil to the utmost their recovered child's desire. But the Vicomte did not travel quite so fast on this road to reconciliation. Satisfied that his child was safe, he required a little time for what he called reflection, but which was, in fact, stratagem. He made a fruitless effort to persuade Felix to betray the secret of Malvide's retreat, but this the honest fellow steadily refused to do. Finding this attempt unsuccessful, the Vicomte cogitated on the best method to accomplish his design of regaining his daughter, and of still preventing her marriage with her plighted lover.

The Vicomte had, in his early intercourse with

the world, obtained that little smattering of diplomatic guile which men of limited intellect consider tantamount to wisdom, because it enables them to deceive and overreach those gifted beings in whom talent leaves no room for the base chicaneries of mean minds. The Vicomte had *mystified* many a better man than himself, and he thought he ran no risk of failure in doing so now with so insignificant a personage as his own servant Felix, although he knew the fellow to be sharp and shrewd. He succeeded amply in deceiving his wife, but Felix proved too cunning for him. When the latter was, after two days' expectation, summoned to receive his master's decision on the grand question of his daughter's happiness, he soon perceived that sincerity was the very farthest of all possible things from the Vicomte's mind. While he whined, and sermonized, and protested, his credulous wife bore the responses with a tone of earnest honesty, but Felix did not credit a single word his master said. He consented to forgive Malvide, and promised to go to her and formally hand her over to her lover's possession, to spare all reproaches, forget past differences, and give her a handsome marriage portion on the spot, and he demanded of Felix to tell the place of her retreat.

It was now Felix's turn to *diplomatize*. He professed his ample reliance on the Vicomte's sincerity, and his delight at the turn affairs had taken, and vowed, with great apparent candour, that he did not know the actual place where Malvide was concealed, but that he left her in a cottage in the neighbourhood of Gedro, from which, however, it was most probable Don Melchior had removed her. To the Vicomte's question of whether he was ready to lead to the cottage where he left her, Felix answered that he was most willing but not quite *ready*, and he demanded two or three days respite from the journey, with a well-invented and better told tale of an illness, the consequence of his late fatigues. This re-

quest was conceded, and the arrangements were concluded by an intimation from the Vicomte that, to give more seriousness to the proceeding, he would endeavour to prevail on Monsieur Depourvu, the rejected suitor, not only peaceably to abandon his claims on Malvide, but to consent to form one of the party, to give up in person all pretensions to her hand, and even attend the ceremony of its being bestowed on Melchior.

Felix thought this was widely overshooting the mark of probable obsequiousness on the part of even the simple Monsieur Depourvu ; and, convinced that some treachery was intended, he was resolved to use every precaution to counteract it. The poor fellow was indeed sadly puzzled what to do, or how to oppose machinations which he did not even understand. He wished to write to Don Melchior and Malvide ; but the uncertainty of affairs at the seat of frontier war made him abandon that plan. Father Munoz's quarters he thought more likely to be fixed, for he knew nothing of the ruinous attempt which the warlike monk had made, and which scattered him and his followers still more widely on the face of the earth. To the priest, therefore, he wrote, giving a full detail of the matters which were passing at the Chateau d'Euplandre, warning him of the approaching arrival of the Vicomte and his party, and entreating the pious champion of church and state to devote his best energies to devising plans for the safety of the interesting, and about-to-be persecuted young lady, whom he had already promised to protect. This letter he forwarded by a trusty messenger, a sort of itinerant courier, who gained his livelihood by carrying on secret communications of this kind, and who safely delivered his despatches into Father Munoz's hands at the inn of Gedro, three days afterwards, late in the evening, when he and I had returned from our attendance on Don Melchior at the Cagot's hut.



This step taken, Felix felt his mind in some slight measure relieved, but he still suffered great inquietude on the score of his own incapacity to avert the treachery which he feared to be impending over his dear young mistress. The time, however, approached for setting out, and he prepared to act as guide on the eventful journey, with a heavy presentiment of difficulty, danger, and disappointment. When the party, consisting of the Vicomte, his lady, Monsieur Depourvu, and Felix, reached St. Sauveur, within a few miles of the vale of Héas, they were obliged to abandon the carriage in which they had travelled so far, as the road farther on was impassable, except for those who journeyed on horseback, on foot, or in the sedan chairs before-mentioned. The arrangements for the remainder of the route were soon made, two of those conveyances being engaged for the old couple, and a horse for the young gentleman, while Felix was to precede the others with a staff in his hand, acting at once as guide and running footman.

Two things surprised and did not tend to satisfy Felix, during their short delay at St. Sauveur. The first was the appearance of six Gens-d'armes, an unusual sight in those parts, between whom and Monsieur Depourvu an intelligence very plainly subsisted, and next, to Felix's still greater astonishment, a Spaniard, evidently one of the ragamuffins belonging to the royal party, who lounged about the inn-door when the carriage arrived, inquired the names of the party, and, giving a letter to the Vicomte, disappeared. Felix watched his master as he read, and thought he could discover a variety of emotions depicted in his face ; but a short apparent struggle between them, ended in his ordering the men to advance as fast as possible to the chapel of the Virgin. They, no doubt, supposing that they carried some pious and wealthy pilgrims, hastened onwards, and arrived at the end of their expedition, just in time,

as we have seen, to interrupt Father Munoz in the ceremony he had commenced.

When Felix reached the chapel, and heard from his late acquaintance, Melchior's servant, what was going on inside, he had no doubt that the note which was delivered to his master at St. Sauveur, was from Malvide; and that the pride of the father would not let him condescend to communicate its contents to him. His joy was boundless at the certainty which seemed to exist of the marriage being completed, and, as he rushed into the church, he quite forgot the six Gens-d'armes who had followed the party all the way from St. Sauveur, to the opening of the vale of Héas, where they halted; and was totally unobservant of Monsieur Depourvu, having remounted his horse, and galloped off at full speed, as I have before described.

When Malvide's arms were loosened from her father's neck, and once more twined round her mother's, the Vicomte, with all the assumed dignity, which apprehension allowed him to muster, demanded "If the ceremony was indeed concluded?"

"No, Sir," said Melchior, who had risen from his kneeling posture to advance towards the Vicomte, "no, luckily we are not too late to receive the honoured sanction of yourself and my Malvide's mother, which alone was wanted to complete the happiness of this scene."

"Then stop, at your peril, I command it!" exclaimed the Vicomte, his harsh features assuming a more rigid expression. "This solemn farce must not be persevered in. Invalid and illegal before, it is now impious, when I, the father of this rash girl, in the very temple of God, protest against this violence."

"It is no violence, it is my own doing, go on—go on—and save me from my father," cried Malvide, throwing herself upon Melchior's neck, but addressing this supplication to the monk.

Munoz proceed! in the name of Heaven itself, I call on you"—cried Melchior—"you have begun the rites, let nothing now make you violate your duty—proceed—proceed!"

Here a scene of indescribable confusion ensued. The Vicomte loudly protested against the marriage going on; his wife fell down in a fit of violent hysterics: Malvide's sweet voice was raised far beyond its usual pitch, in passionate entreaties to Munoz to complete the rites—and Melchior used every persuasion to the same effect, with all the manly eloquence of which he was so much master.

Every one spoke at once; the lounging soldiers of the Faith, gathered round the altar, when the altercation was going on, and their hoarse voices murmured in gloomy tones. Melchior's servant joined his louder exclamations to the din. Serjeant Passepartout, who felt rather sore in being despoiled of his parental authority, boldly opposed the real father of the would-be bride, and execrated the tyranny he was endeavouring to exercise: and, in the midst of all, Felix, who had recognized me, came up to the place where I stood, quite pale from agitation, and his teeth chattering together, and said, in a tone which seemed combined of grief and fear,

"It is too plain, I see it all; it is a plot between my master and that damned monk. What a fool I have been all through! It is all my fault, miserable dupe that I am!"

These words drew my attention to Father Munoz, and I observed him to look on all the bustle around him, with a countenance in which agitation, but of what kind, I knew not, was strongly depicted. He had suffered the clamour to proceed for a long time undisturbed; but at length, he raised himself up in his loftiest style, and elevating both hands, he called out in French, and in a tone that once extinguished the united din of all the others:—

"Silence, and listen to me!"

This sound of authority, coming with all the legislative force of a religious mandate; hushed the confusion at once, and every eye was turned with expectant anxiety towards the monk.

"Silence! nor let the walls of this holy place be profaned by this irreverend clamour. To you Vicomte d'Euplandre, I chiefly address myself: with you this scandal has its origin. Cease your intemperate interruption, and let the ceremony proceed, which you yourself have sanctioned by your consent, and which you are now here by solemn notice to witness. No interruption, Sir," thundered he, with increasing vehemence, as the Vicomte gave a sign, and in that tone which a monarch might quail to.— "This must not be, the holy rites have begun—the marriage is virtually performed—Heaven must not be trifled with, nor the church defrauded!"

A moment's pause allowed the Vicomte time for thought. He was recovering himself and preparing a reply, when a clatter of horses' hoofs, broke the stillness, and produced on all a strange variety of sensation. Malvide clung closer to Melchior; he, with exhausted frame and agitated look, held her to his heart. The father bounded with joy, and in bold defiance of the priest, exclaimed,

"Here they come! the armed police of the land, with the affianced husband of my daughter. No base adventurer like this shall be my son—no vagrant monk like you, shall dare dictate to me. Come in, come in, Depourvu, with the Gens-d'armes—quickly alight!" continued he, in his loudest tone.

"Close the door!" vociferated Munoz in Spanish, and waving his hand. The soldiers of the Faith sprang forward to do his bidding, but the Gens-d'armes were already dismounted and in the porch, and headed by Depourvu they came clattering up the aisle to the impatient calls of the Vicomte.

"Execute the law!" cried he, "seize on this

daughter of mine, no longer worthy to be acknowledged as such—seize on her, Gens-d'armes!”

“At your peril lay hands on this lady,” exclaimed Melchior, who looked terrors, but was evidently little able to act them, for he was so exhausted as rather to require Malvide’s support than afford her any. Her courage and strength seemed to rise with the danger, and she stood firmly clasping her lover, as the Gens-d’armes approached them. The mother now interfered, and with an energy little to be expected from her former display, protested against this violent interference.

“I am her mother,” said she, “and I refuse my assent to these proceedings. Her happiness is my first object, and I sanction her union with the man of her choice.”

“Madame!” cried the Vicomte, trembling with rage, and seizing his wife by the arm, as if to shake her into submission.

“My dear, dear mother,” said Malvide, loosening her hold of Melchior, and clasping the Vicomtesse to her bosom.

“What is all this?” vociferated the Vicomte, stamping on the ground; “am I to be baffled in this way by a pair of women and a monk? Gens-d’armes, do your duty! Depourvu, have you nothing to say?”

“Nothing! To be sure, I have a great deal to say,” said the simple looking young gentleman rousing himself into a very choleric fit: “I am the worst used man in France—my heart is breaking—the affections of the young lady are stolen from me, and her whole marriage-portion is—”

“Hush!” cried the Vicomte, putting his finger to his lips.

“Ay, it was my fortune you thought of!” said Malvide, in a bitterly contemptuous tone.

“No, it was not, Mademoiselle Malvide. It was

your beauteous person—for when I thought you had drowned yourself, I dragged the fish-ponds for your body, all the same as if you had never refused me.”

“Wretch!” muttered Malvide.

“And look here,” continued he, pulling out a roll of parchment from under his short riding cloak, and opening it out at considerable length, “look here, Mister Monk, and you gentlemen all,” turning to Passepartout, myself, and the rest, “here is our contract of marriage, drawn out on vellum; beautifully embellished, and signed, in the first place, by the king himself; what do you think of that? then by Prince T., the Duke of D., the Marquesses of F. and G., eighteen counts and barons, and a list, too long to read to you, of the first royalist names in France! Now, Mademoiselle, what can you say after that?”

An appealing look accompanied this expression; but Malvide did not condescend to return the one, or reply to the other.

Here Serjeant Passepartout, who had been suffering all the agonies of a prattler, wishing to edge in a word, hemmed and hawed, and drawing himself stiffly up, began with an air of mock authority.

“I really must beg to interpose at this stage of this extraordinary affair. In virtue of the character I have undertaken to fulfil, in right of my authority as the giver-away of this amiable and lovely young lady.”

“In right of what?” exclaimed the Vicomte, with a petrifying glance at Passepartout.—“Giver-away!—you!—and who the devil are you, Sir?”

“I, Sir? I, Sir, am Victor Achilles Passepartout, serjeant in the—th infantry of the line, who have served my king and country—and I would have you to know, Monsieur le Vicomte”—

“Silence, Sir,” interrupted the father; “how durst you presume to meddle with my affairs—to break in upon the peace of a noble family, and abet

such infamous conduct as these Spaniards are engaged in? Depend upon it, Mister Serjeant, your colonel shall know of this, and you shall dearly repent it. Giver-away, indeed! Gens'd'armes, do your duty—seize on my daughter! At your peril, delay no longer—you are here especially for that purpose—here is the prefet's authority!”

This tone of pride and menace shrivelled up the growth of the serjeant's importance. He shrunk behind me, pulling up his shirt collar, and muttering very fierce, but rather indistinct retorts; while the Gens-d'armes reluctantly set about in good earnest; obeying the order so peremptorily given, and justified by the magistrate's written warrant. Felix kept all through the scene, wringing his hands and exclaiming to me,

“A plot, a plot, a vile plot between my master and the monk! You'll see, how it will end—treachery and villainy from top to bottom—a plot, a plot, a plot!”

I was, for my part, a silent spectator of this most curious business; I felt all the awkwardness of my situation, but did not think it possible to better the concerns of those I was so much interested for, by an interference that might have only embarrassed myself. I preferred lying quietly by, until some opportunity might offer of being really of service.—Besides, I could not help (despite of Felix's denunciation,) having considerable reliance on the good faith and determination of the monk. A natural objection to think ill of persons I had once esteemed, an inclination rather to wait for being deceived than suspiciously to anticipate, influenced me on this occasion, as it has done on many others through life, to my cost! I, therefore, watched with an anxious, but not impatient curiosity for the next speech of Father Munoz; and at last it burst forth in his own peculiar manner.

“This sanctuary is profaned—the church is bra-

ved—her minister insulted—her rights trampled on! Gens-d'armes, I warn you, that you are about to commit a mortal sin! As for you, gentlemen, I shall feel it my duty to curse you from this holy place, if you dare persist."

This much was said in French, but it produced little effect, except in causing a frightful paleness to overspread Depourvu's countenance. But the Vicomte urged on the Gens-d'armes, and they were on the point of seizing on Malvide, and snatching her from the arms of her mother and lover.

"Then, since words are of no avail," cried Munoz, in the high sounding diction of his native tongue, "since religion is scoffed and its temple defiled, soldiers of the Faith, champions of the church, children of God, do your duty!"

With these words, he drew from beneath his cassock his gleaming sabre, and, at the signal, full twenty long bladed knives started from their scabbards, in the hands of the hitherto careless and inactive Spaniards.

"Now, who dares oppose my orders? Go on, my gallant friends," cried Munoz, his military ardour overcoming all religious feelings, except that of *domination*. The remainder of the assemblage seemed paralyzed by the prompt obedience of the Spaniards, who immediately set about the work they were evidently prepared for. Pushing aside the Gens-d'armes, they approached Melchior and Malvide, and gently seizing him, they laid him on his litter, and carefully bound him down with chords, which they carried about them. Four of them raised him up—two others advanced towards the door, while the remainder formed a rank, at each side of the litter, keeping the Vicomte, Depourvu, and their Gens-d'armes outside the lines, but admitting within them Malvide and her mother, who both staid close to Don Melchior, and endeavoured to pacify his rage at this proceeding.



The whole thing was done so suddenly that neither Passepartout, Felix, or myself had time to exchange observations.

"Now onwards to the frontier!" cried the monk, in Spanish, to his men, "bear your prisoner safely! And, gentlemen," continued he, speaking in French, "it is thus I terminate this disgraceful scene. Married or single, this rebel Spaniard is my prisoner—I take him in the name of my king, although on neutral ground, and I hope your monarch will bear me harmless—for it is no time standing on nice points. Had the ceremony been completed, his wife would have been my prize as well, for an old law subjects all women married within a league of the frontiers to the allegiance of their husbands,\* but having been grossly interrupted, this lady is free to abandon Don Melchior, or to follow his fate. Let her decide quickly, for we must not lose time.

"He is my husband—I will follow him to whatever fate your treachery may doom him—lead on!" exclaimed Malvide, in broken and suffocating accents.

"She shall not go—I will tear her from his side—Gens-d'armes, do your duty!" cried the Vicomte; but as they made a movement, as if to seize Malvide, once more Father Munoz waved his hand, and a dozen knives were held out, so as quite to intimidate all opposition, and Malvide walked beside the litter which was now carried on at a brisk pace, the monk following in martial triumph.

The Vicomte caught his wife firmly, and held her back from her daughter's hurried embrace. Passepartout stood steadily with his four men, having no regret for the Vicomte's defeat, puzzled at the monk's conduct, but determined to observe a strict neutrality in this strange proceeding. I went on, resolved

\* My readers need not search for this law, for the monk acknowledged the mention of it to have been a *ruse*.

to follow the fortunes of Melchior and Malvide, as long as I was permitted. Felix swore vehemently that he too would go with Malvide and watch over her to the last—and, as we all left the church, I saw the Vicomte stamping and foaming with fury, while Depourvu tremblingly applied a smelling bottle alternately to his own and the Vicomtesse's nose.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

ONCE out of the chapel, the party moved on at a rate which kept Malvide almost breathless, and gave Felix and myself enough to do to keep up with them. We had, however, proceeded but a short distance, when the monk contracted his strides, his men did as much by their's; and one of them, obeying the orders of his chief, approached a hut which stood a little way from our path up the mountain side; from which he soon descended, leading a small horse, with a rude saddle formed of goat skins, and a rope serving as an apology for a bridle. Upon this animal Malvide mounted, and the whole party was again in motion, following the course of the valley to the north east, and soon passing the opening to the vale of Estaubé, and leaving behind the hideous crags which form the bounds of its solitude.

Turning suddenly round the shoulder of the most northern of the chain of hills that skirt the valley of Héas, we soon crossed a little river which flows rapidly down to join the Gave at Gedro: and we were quickly on the ascent leading to the desert mountains between Pie Long and Neon Vielle. Felix and I kept at some distance behind the monk.

who was himself always about a hundred yards in rear of the main party. Melchior and Malvide were thus unobstructedly left to their own converse, for the rough Spaniards were mostly, if not all, ignorant of French, and at any rate they evidently showed no inclination to interrupt their prisoner in any communication with his fair companion.

When they had got some way up the ascent, and were on the point of entering a defile which would shut out completely the view of the country we had been in so long, Father Munoz made a signal to his men, and they obeyed it by halting and laying down the litter. He then turned round and beckoned to me. I answered his silent summons by stepping briskly forward; and Felix accompanied me, although with no good-will to the monk, against whom he had continued to pour a torrent of reproachful abuse from the moment we quitted the chapel. We were very soon close to Munoz, who silently walked onwards, we beside him, until we reached the place where the litter was deposited on the heath, with Malvide, who had dismounted, kneeling beside it.

"So, Munoz, was this well done?" cried Don Melchior. "How can you come before me, and brave my reproaches? Could I have suspected *you* of this baseness!"

"What, Melchior!" said the monk, in a tone of infinitely more sprightliness than I had yet heard from him, and with an awkward air of humour in his manner, "What! Is it you that speak thus? Is this the clear-sighted, clever, intelligent, Melchior de Tre-vazos? I should rather have taken it for that fish-pond searcher, Depourvu. And do you really believe me treacherous? Did you not comprehend the stratagem, which alone could have saved you in the crisis of your fate, and that of her who is, in my eyes, your wife? Come, Melchior, rouse yourself,

and, with loosened cords, know no bonds but hers!" —With these words, he cut the ropes which had held Don Melchior down.

"Is it possible!" cried the latter, rising up, "you are indeed a man of mystery—but pardon my dullness, Munoz; accept my grateful thanks, my best friend."

"Extraordinary, noble man!" exclaimed Malvide, throwing herself at Munoz's feet, and catching his hand which she pressed to her lips with warmth. But this was too much for him. He started, trembled, snatched his hand away, and turned abruptly to the other side of the narrow path, where Felix, who was working himself into a fit of astonished atonement, dropped on both his knees, and holding his hands up in the attitude of prayer, begged the priest to forgive his suspicions, and inflict the severest penance which such unholy misgivings merited.

Father Munoz extricated himself from this importunate penitent, (whose very sudden fit of piety did not last long,) and recovering from the more embarrassing acknowledgments of Malvide, he addressed Melchior again, but with much greater gravity than before.

"Yes, my friend, you may be satisfied of my constant fidelity to you. I could not, if I would, betray you. A strong principle of duty binds me to your interest now, and I will see you *both* safely through this intricate embarrassment. My political feelings, my religious duty, are all apart from these sentiments of private and personal regard. I know you now only as Melchior, my old college friend—I forget that you are my opponent in public life, and have been my conqueror in the field. Rely on my acting up to this!—and now to the immediate danger which may press upon you. The Vicomte and his expected son-in-law will not rest here, depend upon it; some effort to overtake us, and get possession of your bride—for such she is, or at least shall be—will

be immediately made. This must be averted. I spoke of the frontiers ; and this route on which we now are, would lead to the pass of Bielsa, towards which they will no doubt suppose us to have gone, as the nearest entrance into Spain. There, however, we cannot attempt to go. Your late wound, and this present agitation, forbid the exertion, and you would not, I must believe, entrust this fair treasure into the perils of frontier warfare, where you could not protect her, and where neither I nor these gallant fellows could at present venture."

" 'Tis all too true," said Melchior ; " but in this impossibility, what is to be done ?"

" To seek some secure retreat—and *such* I know of—and to deceive our pursuers, if they become such—and *that* I can accomplish. But first," continued the monk, " let me briefly explain, what may have appeared treacherous, and even still, perhaps, looks doubtful, in my past conduct."

We all listened with attention—but none gaped so wide as Felix. Father Munoz continued:

" Well, then, when, two days back, I received the letter from this worthy follower and trusty friend of yours (Felix smiled contentedly,) announcing the Vicomte's consent, and the approach of himself and the lady's mother, I resolved to be, as I told you on the very day I got the letter, myself the solemnizer of your union. I did not at first listen to the fears of treachery expressed by Felix—(Felix nodded his head, in approbation of his own sagacity) and I wrote to the Vicomte last night a letter, announcing the place and hour fixed for the marriage, which I sent by one of my followers to await his arrival at St. Sauveur, and which as it appears was safely delivered. I there used every expression which could conciliate him, and held you up, my friend, in the tone you so well merited. Still some misgivings came slowly across my mind. I read again the letter of Felix—I recollected what he had told me, during our interviews

in Spain, of the Vicomte's hostility to the match—I put together what I had learned from you of this harsh father's character, and what I had, in days gone by, heard of it from his neighbours—and I resolved to be on my guard, and prepared for whatever might compromise your happiness, and the lady's safety. I therefore, as you have seen, revealed somewhat of the affair, to the troop of devoted followers—I reckoned on them, and gave them my orders. You have seen their conduct—that speaks for them. But I determined to give the Vicomte every fair chance, and I purposely concealed his coming from you and *her*, that the surprise might be more delightful if he were sincere, and the measures of opposition wholly *my own*, should he prove false. I have no more to add—I leave my conduct to your candid consideration. I have taken all upon myself—no suspicion of previous concert can attach to you. No law has been violated but that of neutrality, and you alone have a right to complain of me; but I trust to your forgiveness,” and a faint smile accompanied his words, as Don Melchior pressed his hand in his.

“My mention,” continued he, “of the frontier law relative to the allegiance of women married on the limits, was mere invention, to give a better colour to the apparent treachery which I strove to affix to my own conduct. That was, like the assertion of my design against you, Melchior, a falsehood—I confess it—but these only means of procuring your safety, and ensuring that which alone makes it worth your having, will be justified, I believe, by the end which I hope to accomplish.”

We will not stop, to debate on the monk's morality; my own went hand in hand with his, in this affair; and I joined my warm approval to the reiterated expressions of gratitude which burst from Melchior and Malvide, re-echoed in loud applauses by Felix, whose bearing on the occasion accorded with the promise of his name.

"Let our measures be prompt then," cried Melchior. "I shudder at the thought of violence being used against this dear object, whom, alas! I cannot now defend. What is to be done? I trust all to your energy and foresight, Munoz—pray decide at once."

"My decision has been for some time made," said the monk. "We must here divide the party. Four men alone must remain with you, enough to bear you along, and almost too much to avoid observation, even in the wilds you are about to traverse. I, with the remainder, will take this southward path towards the pass of Bielsa. An imitation of your litter shall be borne along, so as to deceive those who may follow us. You and your bride must, under the guidance of these four brave and faithful fellows, proceed direct to the caves of Sarrancolin, where you can without risk await my coming. Trust to my joining you ere many hours break into the night. To our worthy Felix I would suggest his rejoining his master and the simple tool of his tyranny. He can accomplish two desirable objects, the tranquillizing of the mother's mind, and, by the exercise of his inventive talents, detaching, if possible, the baffled Depourvu from the party of the Vicomte, and leading him into our toils in the caverned solitudes of Sarrancolin. Once there, I can conceive it easy to persuade him to become not only a witness but a party to your marriage, which must *there* be completed in one of those subterraneous wonders of nature, which want but consecration to give them the solemnity of the most laboured temple worked of art. What say you, Felix: will you undertake the task?"

"Yes, that I will—and trust to my imagination for inveigling the young gentleman. I am ready to start on your reverence's mission, but how must I find out the caves of Sarrancolin?"

"I will be your guide to them," replied Father

Munoz ; "and you must meet me at nightfall, or a messenger whom I shall send to conduct you to me, here on this very spot, whence, by quick travelling, we shall reach the place in a few hours. I will look for you here, Felix, at six o'clock—and I hope, if your ingenuity does not forsake you, that you will be accompanied by Monsieur Depourvu."

"Well then," said Felix, "since time is precious, and suspicion must not be excited, I shall now go to rejoin the Vicomte and his party, to whom I must say that I have been driven back from my attendance on Mademoiselle, by your reverence and your Spaniards, who were crossing the frontiers with their prize."

"Exactly so," said Munoz ; "and now for our English friend—what says he? Is he tired of this adventurous affair, or will he go through with it till its close?"

"I shall certainly not abandon my friends in this moment of doubt and difficulty," cried I ; "and, if they permit me, I shall join my feeble aid to that of their escort, and proceed with them to Sarrancolin."

Consent and thanks for this proposition followed as matters of course ; and in a very short time we were all in route for our several destinations—the priest and his detachment, with their mock prisoner on his litter, winding along the mountain path towards the pass of Bielsa, and Felix trudging his way back towards the vale of Héas, where we could plainly distinguish the Vicomte and his party in serious conference.

As the monk and his men disappeared, and were seen again at intervals, and the party in the vale took their steady observation, we slowly proceeded on our way, concealed completely from view, yet, from the nature of the scanty woods we marched through, commanding for a while a perfect sight of the whole.

Never, I think, did I observe the mountain range and the basements it sprang from, to more advantage



than from that spot. The day was of that light transparent kind which in these districts gives a distinctness to all objects, inexpressibly beautiful. There was none of the vagueness of mist which nourishes the abstract wanderings of mind in such a scene, but all was marked with the reality of nature's touch, and standing out in living evidence of its actual presence. Below me where the Vales of Estaubé and Héas, dreary and desolate foundations, from which upsprung at once huge walls of granite, that formed the first gradation of the stupendous chain spreading far away from east to west. Mount Perdu heaved up its giant-head, a cone thick-covered with snow; and its vast and swelling sides displayed, in every varied aspect, rocks, woods, ravines, and all that the mind imagines of the wild and terrible. The surrounding mountains presented a mass of unbroken simplicity and grandeur. No shock of nature seems to have ever moved a blade of the bright herbage which smiles in perpetual verdure on their sides. A thousand varieties of, to me, nameless flowers sprinkled the foundation green, as if a shower of every-coloured gems had fallen upon the earth. Silver and gold and saffron, blue and crimson, in all their most delicate shades, were blended in rich colouring there. A stream ran through the nearest valley, in a bed of marble, dazzlingly white. Of this, two cascades were formed, of singular beauty. The first fell from a considerable height, its light foam dissipating in a veil of mist, through which the dancing sunbeams formed arches of rainbow hues to grace their sport. The second of these waterfalls was still more striking. Its broad and limpid sheet flowed smoothly to the verge of the marble blocks from which it fell. There, divided in its course by an enormous rock, one half dashed brawling on through the picturesque impediments with which nature loves to vary her creations; the other streaming down from the projecting ledge, in

a bright and continuous flow, a height which I neither could nor would care to measure, and falling unobstructedly into the basin where these liquid twins were re-united, and whence they bounded on in a sinuous course, which the eye could not follow long. Pasturages, hamlets and scattered villages were all within my immediate view. In the distance, the long chain of blue and snowy hills formed limits to the sight, and a starting place for fancy's adventurous flights. No one concomitant was wanting, to make the situation perfect in its kind.

And how many thousands of our travellers, thought I—and I must repeat the thought—have never known these wondrous scenes!—travellers who have passed admiring days among the steaming crowds of cathedral aisles, the sumptuous fopperies of palace finery, the dark disgusto of gloomy catacombs, never tired of wondering at the works of men, but ignorant of these glorious master-pieces of the Hand by which man himself was made.

While I paused to look back upon this scene, the convoy had disappeared in the defile; and turning away at once from the objects I had too long gazed at, I plunged into the copse which led to tracts of a different aspect and character. I soon overtook my friends, and the sturdy fellows who silently and carefully bore Don Melchior along, with all that air of proud fidelity so distinctive of Spaniards, feeling themselves bound, by every honourable tie, to the service of the man whom a few days before they had ranked amongst their deadliest foes.

We went cautiously forward at a steady pace, the Spaniards making light of their burden. Malvide, who was now enveloped in one of the short mantles of the soldier guides, cheering Melchior by her affectionate devotion, and I, almost always a little behind, except when I at times insisted on relieving one of the bearers in carrying their gallant burthen.

Before nightfall we had passed the base of *Neon Vieille*, left *Mount D'Arbizon* far to our right, skirted *Lake D'Esconbons*, and crossed that species of isthmus which joins the *Pic du Midi*, to the southern mountains. A rapid path winds up the hills, and favours the descent at the other side. The *Cau de Spada*, a pointed and rugged hill which terminates this passage, is the last of the chain of savage rocks bounding at this side the dreary valley of *Bastan*, into which we now entered, and from which we commenced our ascent of the *Tourmalet*. We wound cautiously up the steep but well cut road which leads up this boundary between the horrid desolation of *Bastan* and the smiling loveliness of the vale of *Compan*, the most fertile and pastoral district of the *Pyrenees*, and not exceeded in the world for the charms peculiar to regions like it.

As we descended the *Tourmalet* by its eastern side, the shades of night came on; and the moon, slowly rising before us through a sea of mist, showed the surrounding hills and vales in many wild distortions of their actual forms and scites, which would have made it impossible for one unaccustomed to mountain wanderings, at all hours and seasons, to recognise the scenes with which he might have formed a noontide familiarity. At times a lake, of as perfect mimicry as ever lived in the deception of a desert mirage, seemed to reflect the moonbeams, and was studded with islands, and diversified with isthmuses, bays, and promontories. The soft southern breeze which blew down from *Spain*, soon swept away the vapours that produced these effects, and a group of rugged and barren rocks stood bared to the astonished eye. The wildest transformations were thus at once produced by every shifting breeze, and belied almost as soon in magic change. But all of the party were used to these scenes. Even *Malvide* had often, in her former mountain sojourn, gazed

delightedly at these freaks of elemental illusion ; and turning fondly to her lover, she felt proudly sure that his affection knew no variations such as these.

The bubbling source of the Adour sent out its narrow stream to guide us through the valley upon which we now entered. We followed its course until we came to one of those mountain hamlets, the primitive construction of which makes us wonder at the artificial wants of man. Eight or ten of these low and little huts, in which the inhabitants have just room enough to eat and sleep, but the height of which seems to have been formed on man's very lowest measurement, looked brown in the moonlight with their moss-covered walls and faded thatch. A little court-yard enclosed each, surrounded by a rustic peristyle formed of trunks of pine trees, or long stones standing on end, and supporting a roof of turf, under which the cattle securely reposed. Every thing soundly slept, and we passed through the very centre of the hamlet, without disturbing aught within its limits. We struck off to the right, and stopped for a while at the foot of a rude wooden cross elevated on a heap of stones, to mark, not the spot where murder had polluted the soil, but where the honest mountaineers might kneel on ground that had been consecrated by many a pious orison. Here my brandy-flask, that constant garniture of my pocket on such expeditions, was emptied of its last drop, for the Spaniards had quite exhausted theirs ; and here, poor Ranger, who was the silent companion of all my movements since I mentioned him so many chapters back, finished the last remnant of the provisions which I had managed to secure for his use.

Refreshed once more, we renewed our progress ; and leaving the village of Grip to our left, we crossed, in a devious course, the green and cultured slopes which form the first pasturages of the valley of Campan. On casting a last look on the drowsy and moon-lit hamlet, my eye caught the enormous

magnitude of the Pic du Midi, frowning blackly down upon the pastoral scene, and threatening to crush it with an immediately fall.

Valley and hill were alternately traversed, until we passed the natural enclosure which contains the celebrated marble quarries of St. Marie ; and thence we entered, by a winding path, the pass which communicates between the valleys of Campan and Aure, in the latter of which stands Sarrancolin, the place of our destination. A deep, thick forest now received the path ; and scarcely had we plunged into its eternal shades, when a straggling moonbeam, piercing the gloom, seemed to repose upon a rock carved into the form of an antique altar, from which gushed a stream that was immediately lost, as it gurgled its way into the wooded solitudes around us.

The moon lit our path at intervals, and when we were again left in shade, the steady footsteps of our guides went on in equal security. My footing was not quite so sure ; for the carpet which covered the wood and the desert patches that now and then intervened, was of a verdure so smooth that I frequently slipped, and should have fallen had I not given my attention to Malvide, whose pony I steadily held by his rude bridle, but rather supporting myself, than giving security to his safe steps.

As far as I could judge, in the insufficient light of the moon and stars, the fertile beauties of this forest could scarcely be exceeded by those untrodden deserts where all nature's liberality has been lavished. The immense height of the trees, the luxuriant thickness of their foliage, the profusion of climbing plants interlacing them together, the aromatic herbage in thick tufts covering the earth, altogether surpassed all my former experience of the munificence with which nature clothes those unfrequented retreats. Arrived at length at the summit of the hill which is thickly clothed by this forest, we came suddenly out upon a wild unsheltered desert, with

not a shrub, and scarce a blade of herbage to cover the hard earth which forms the soil. Half an hour's walk led us again to a descent which had the advantage of a broad paved way, formed for facilitating the carriage of the trees, transported from the forest to the valley of Aure, into which this precipitous path descends.

A road of infinite beauty led us through a valley which seemed to combine all the varied charms of mountain scenery. I faintly distinguished the wooded sides of the hills which bounded the deep ravine to my left; I heard the river murmuring below; and imagination pictured the splendid gradations of the mountain masses, which I knew to rise up from the ground we trod, in all the sublimity of their nature. But I saw no more. The moon was now lost behind those very mountains; and we passed on in silence and obscurity, close to the little town of Sarrancolin, without disturbing even the painful monotony of the watch dogs' baying howl, until the four supporters of Don Melchior's couch laid it gently down, on the sloping side of a hill, of safe and easy ascent; and, pointing to a narrow aperture almost overgrown by brambles, one of the men exclaimed,

"This, Senor, is the cave of Sarrancolin."

At the mention of this place, the promised bourn of her expectations, her fatigues, and disappointments, the place where the priest had solemnly engaged to complete her marriage, and secure her happiness, Malvide could not restrain her feelings; but uttering a feeble scream of joy, she flung herself from her pony into Melchior's arms, and in a half expressed hysterical effort would have told him her delight at having reached a harbour of safety.—But she could not speak, nor did her emotions require utterance.

"You are worn out, my Malvide, by the fatigue and anxiety of this eventful day. Compose your-

self, my love—all our perils are now past—here begins our real happiness.”

Don Melchior spoke these words in his most soothing tone; but there seemed to me an air of languid melancholy in his manner, and the effect of the whole scene was painful and oppressive.

“Had we not better enter,” said I, “and seek some repose at least, since we are not likely to procure refreshment?”

“Now, Senor,” said the former spokesman,—“Who goes in first?”

“We will go together,” said Malvide to Melchior, in an under tone, having sufficiently understood Spanish to comprehend the question.

“The lady and myself will enter together,” replied Melchior.

“That, Senor, is impossible—that is to say, it is impossible to pass the gallery two together, and to descend into the cavern; it must be one at a time.—His majesty and his confessor who are never separate, they say, should separate here or not see the cave of Sarrancolin. This is the true ground for a divorce (no disparagement to your Excellency’s marriage,) for a conclave of cardinals could not keep a man and his wife from parting company, between the mouth of the cave and the verge of the precipice within.”

The levity of this man’s words and manner was not pleasing to any of us, but Malvide was evidently alarmed by it. She shuddered as she looked on the dark mouth of this sanctuary, which it seemed as if despair alone should enter, and she hung back as the soldier offered to take her hand and lead her in. I saw that this was no time to offend these fellows, in whose power we were so completely; so I stepped forward, and proposed entering first to try the fortunes of the way.

“Strike the light then,” said the soldier, and one

of his comrades immediately obeyed his orders, and a couple of short flambeaux, brought for the occasion, were almost immediately flaring within the cavern's mouth. At the moment of entering, I cast my eyes back upon the deep glen and the hills above, and I just saw the rosy tinge of light, which hovers over the mountain's verge at the opening of the dawn. In another instant I was in the porch of the subterraneous retreat, the wonders of which we were about to explore.

"Holloa! Who goes there? What's that?" cried one of the men, looking back into the brambles and brush-wood about the entrance. I stepped out for a moment, and heard a noise in the direction to which the man proceeded.

"The devil and his imps!" exclaimed the Spaniard, "what do you think we have here, Pedro? Why, old Father Jose's mule, by the life of my saint, with all his housings and panniers, but all empty. How, in the name of the Virgin, could the beast have wandered here? Wherever his reverence is, he took care to take out the provision, at any rate. Come here, poor fellow, come here, and let me tie you up to this branch, till we can come out again and put you on your road in search of your master."

Suiting the action to the word, he tied up the mule, and we returned into the gaping aperture.

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## CHAPTER XX.

THE very commencement of the cave presented some difficulty. The pass was narrow, long and rough; and the man who preceded me set the example of groping on hands and knees. Like him I had



a torch in one hand, for these necessary auxiliaries had been multiplied several fold. After proceeding in this way about twenty yards, we reached a sloping mass of crystal, six or seven feet high. Up this we scrambled, and found the place above less difficult of passage than that we left behind. The space became now wider and higher, and, opening to the right and left, showed the commencing wonders of the place. The stalactites, of the consistency of stone or crystal, are numerous and large, and of that amazing regularity in shape and size which would appear the effect of the most measured care in some well skilled architect. Little was wanting to give the perfect appearance of the interior of a gothic chapel; and there can be no doubt but that as the Corinthian order, the most beautiful variety of Grecian architecture, owed its origin to the simple model of a girl carrying a basket of flowers upon her head, so the gothic groups of arch and column were first formed on the plan of spar and stalactite, in natural combinations such as those.

I looked round me, and saw that Melchior and Malvide, with the aid of the remaining men, had passed the first difficulties of the way, and were within the recess which I myself had reached. Malvide looked round, astonished, but evidently ill at ease. Suspicion was working with her sensitive bosom, and preparing her cheeks, which fatigue and agitation had already robbed of their roses, to receive the light of the torches, on a colouring that assorted with their lurid glare. She looked more like a pale victim in some heathen rite, than a bride in the hectic flush of mingled hope and fear. Don Melchior's exhausted appearance was in sad keeping with her's; and an inconceivable air of wretchedness pervaded the whole scene.

I inwardly execrated the inflexible father who caused this misery; and the whole system of political abuse which nurtured the obstacles of the happi-

ness of this young couple. My thoughts flew back to all the circumstances of their chequered adventures; and reflections on the fanatical opposition to liberty, in which all their distress arose, led, by a natural gradation of thought, to the existence of the *Cordon Sanitaire*, by which all was protected and about to be abetted. Then Sanchez and his murderous weapon flashed before my mental vision—and my eyes fell upon the fierce counterparts in mien and dress of that arch villain, whose arms and knives might yet be turned to effect the purpose he had so nearly accomplished.

These were the irresistible workings of the mind's misgivings, and the countenances of Melchior and Malvide were eloquent with the expression of a similar train of fancies.

The leader of the soldiers asked, "If we would now move on?"

"On!" exclaimed Malvide to Melchior, "shall we then go further into this desolate place?"

"Yes, yes, my love," replied he, "we must follow our guides—our protectors let me call them—and pursue the path which destiny has pointed out. Lead on, my friend, we are ready?"

The way became in a little time narrow, low, and difficult as before. We went slowly forwards, however, carrying from the humid walls a portion of their slimy coat, while droppings from the roof fell upon us, as cold as the icicles they came from. We at length arrived at the seeming end of this narrow passage, for no egress appeared, but a small cavity which gaped in the wall before us, several feet above the floor we trod on, and apparently almost as difficult to reach as to pass through. Through this, however, the soldier said we were to pass. Malvide hesitated once more. Melchior again consented, and endeavoured to reassure her sinking spirits. I, as before, formed the forlorn hope, and Ranger crawled by me, step for step.

The man who had usually preceded me, now proposed that I should take his place, that he might the more readily assist in my upward movements, and prepare the ropes which were to aid in my descent from the inward precipice, alluded to before by the leader of the party. I accordingly laid down my gun, and climbed the sloping wall, and with some inconvenience passing through the aperture, I was soon enabled to stand up on a solid platform of rock, every thing beyond being thick gloom.

"Steady there!" cried the Spaniard; "advance three paces, and you will be dashed to atoms."

Nothing more was wanting to arrest my steps. I stood steadily, holding my dog close to my foot, and he clung to me, as if instinct had warned him of the danger beyond. In a moment or two, the rough hand of the Spaniard appeared through the cavity, thrusting forward a torch which I gladly seized. As I held it above my head and shook it before me from the ledge of rock, its gleam was feebly lost in the thick atmosphere of the apparently immeasurable depths.

The Spaniard and one of his comrades successively joined me where I stood, and they carried a long rope, with various ingenious ties, rudely made, in which they proposed at once to encircle my body, preparatory to my swinging off the ledge into the chasm, at the bottom of which, they told me, was the place of final secrecy and safety.

My own sentiments and sensations being but of auxiliary importance in this record of adventures, in which I bore only a minor part, I will not dwell on those which I experienced on hearing this proposition. I freely confess that I started with some feeling, not of pleasure certainly; and a curdling thrill *did* seem to move my nerves. Treachery, violence, perpetual imprisonment, and secret murder, were combined in the flash of thought that gleamed through my brain. The monk's absence—my sepa-

ration from Melchior—the possibility of a design against his liberty or life, and the expediency of putting me out of the way of its execution—Malvide's forlorn situation—and a dozen such harassing reflections, all crowded upon me. My hesitation, however, was but of a moment. It was no time to temporize even with one's own fears ; so I delivered myself up, with a careless air, to the operations of those who looked like my executioners.

The rope was fastened well round my chest and under my arms, which were almost pinioned by the pressure. A torch was placed in one of my hands, with the other I firmly held the rope close above my head ; the Spaniards placed their backs against the rock, in a projection of which another torch was stuck, they put their feet closely against the base of the rugged wall, and in an attitude of steady resistance to my weight, as it was to fall below, one of them called out,

“ Now, Senor, spring fearlessly and wide.”

My mind being wound up to meet what was indisputably dangerous, I felt all that condensed energy of nerve which invariably accompanies such a situation, be the danger what it may, and which gives a sort of wild sentiment of pleasure, totally undefinable. I venture to say that no man ever yet swung from off the ledge of this chasm, even in circumstances less adventurous than those I have described, without experiencing what I now attempt to tell of ; and the many travellers who have shrunk from the appalling plunge, will at least be able to imagine the variety of sensation the thing was likely to produce.

As I took my last step towards the brink, Ranger put his fore paws upon me, and whined as he looked up. I pushed him from me rather rudely with my foot, and I swung off into the thick air of the chasm. As I dangled downwards, the cord slipping gently over the edge of the platform above, a wild and

plaintive whine sounded over my head—a loud howl succeeded—and in an instant more, I saw my faithful dog spring from the rock right down into the gloomy gulf. He struck against me as he fell—knocked the torch extinguished from my hand—and was lost to my sight and hearing both together.

I cannot tell the pang that I felt at that moment. To see my old and tried companion dashed to atoms, as it were, in the very act of proving his attachment, without my being able to move a finger for his safety, was torturing to a degree that may, I think, be conceived by any who ever had a favourite dog. Every thing seemed to swim round, and I thought: I never should touch the bottom, which both the Spaniards swore I was close to, at the same time expressing with loud oaths their horror at the fate of my poor Ranger. They stood as close as possible to the edge, and, with their torch extended, strove to light the depths below them. But, in vain; when I touched the bottom, all was impenetrably dark.

I groped cautiously about, on what was, to my surprise, a soft substance unlike earth, calling on Ranger; and I quickly felt his body, which I no sooner touched than his tongue performed its kindest salutation on my outstretched hand. He whined and barked with tones of real delight; and, to my astonishment and joy, he next jumped upon me, covering me with most boisterous caresses. While I was occupied in ascertaining with my hands that he had no broken bones, and wondering how it was possible for him to be unharmed. Melchior and Malvide had safely reached the platform which I had just quitted, and I saw a rude chair, composed of part of Melchior's litter, which was broken up for the occasion, prepared by the soldiers for my heroine's and her invalided lover's easy descent. I spoke cheerfully from below, telling them that the danger was but imaginary, and promising to assist them as they came swinging down.

While I spoke, a rustling noise near me made me suddenly turn round, and I was instantly laid hold of by a pair of powerful arms, the person vehemently demanding, in Spanish, who and what I was, while I plainly felt the broad sharp blade of the knife he wielded in his hand. I shall be excused for having quite forgotten the answer I made to this rough summons, under circumstances so startling. I said something, however, which, coupled with the sight of those above, satisfied my interlocutor, for he loosed his hold and said,—

“So, so, it’s all right I find ; but I dreamed that something jumped on me. Here, general, they are come.”

At this moment a light in the distant gloom came forward faintly, and in a little more, I was truly rejoiced to observe the tall lank figure of Father Muñoz, making its way towards me with a torch held in his hand. He cautiously picked his steps over the rugged obstructions of the spar-strewn floor ; and as he came close, I observed a mattress with blankets spread out close to the spot I landed upon, and upon the safe surface of which, with the body of the Spaniard who had slept on it, Ranger had happily fallen, and thus been almost miraculously saved. A couple of baskets of provisions stood close by, and I easily divined, without any explanation, that all these preparations for sleeping, eating, and drinking, were furnished by the provident attention of the monk, and had been borne on the back of the mule which had surprised us on our arrival at the cave.

“Well, I am here before you, my friends,” said Father Muñoz, addressing at once me, and Melchior, who stood above, and Malvide, whose downward course he anxiously watched, as she was safely lowered in her temporary chair. The monk kept cautiously distant from her, and left to me all the care of safely unboarding her from the chair, and of explaining his

having out-marched us, and made such careful provision for our wants. In the mean time Melchior was lowered down, and renewed expressions of surprise and gratitude on his part, and that of Malvide, were the best tributes that could be offered to the monk's prompt movements and unceasing energy.

He soon explained to us the ample success of his plan in having divided the party ; for the Vicomte, re-enforced by some gens-d'armes, had followed at full speed his division, with the false belief of its encircling Don Melchior and his attendant bride. The monk having lured them by the most difficult and almost inaccessible paths, into the very heart of the pass of Bielsa, struck suddenly at nightfall into a track that wound in a totally contrary direction round the foot of Mount Arbison. He was accompanied by only two of his party, the remainder keeping up a sham appearance of retreat into Spain, but intending, as soon as it was dark, to return into France, where alone they were secure from the patriot troops ; and leaving the Vicomte and his gens-d'armes, fatigued, benighted, and bewildered, to pursue their search or abandon it at their pleasure. Munoz, whose mind possessed the true greatness that attends to little things, directed his course to one of those temporary encampments of his own unfortunate and vagabond followers which were scattered through the mountains ; and there he procured from fat Father José, a Capuchin of orthodox dimensions, wine, bread, and meat, (although it happened to be on a Friday) with a couple of mattresses, bolsters, and covering, and mules for himself and his attendants. Arrived at the cave, one of these men was sent back with the unladen mules ; and it appeared that one of *them* thought proper to break loose from his control, and that it still wandered about the hills.

" Now, my friends, repose yourselves awhile, take some refreshments, banish all fear, return thanks

to the Providence that has protected you, and then, without delay, we will proceed to solemnize the holy contract which makes you one in the sight of Heaven, and which man can never, in conscience, annul."

So spoke Father Munoz. Melchior and Malvide looked their approbation, with happier faces than they had lately shown. I ventured to ask after Felix and the issue of his embassy.

"I have heard nothing of him," said the monk, "but I have sent a trusty guide to await him at the appointed place, and I doubt not he will soon arrive, with or without the object of his attempt."

Several torches were now lighted, two of the men came down with all the apparatus of Don Melchior's litter, and the contents of the baskets were soon displayed on tables of crystal blocks that offered themselves conveniently to our use. We all ate fast, and some of us heartily; I was amongst the latter number, but the lovers seemed to despatch their portion of the meal less from appetite than anxiety to remove the obstacle which retarded the ceremony, the completion of which they so much longed for.

The place in which we were was but a sort of vestibule to the grand chamber of the cave. It was vaulted, high, and narrow, with imperfect pillars formed of stalactites, but almost all defaced and broken off by the curious travellers who had descended, or by the mountaineers who carried pieces away to sell to those who declined the expedition. Our repast concluded, the monk, in one of his most solemn tones, exclaimed,

"Now to the chapel, my friends!" and he had once more his frequent air of a man wholly wrapped up and abstracted in considerations of his sacred functions.

We all stood up. I offered an arm to Melchior, who at the other side, was half supported by and half supporting Malvide. Two of the men preced-



ed us with a torch in every hand ; the monk moved forward next, similarly furnished, and we three brought up the rear, thus lighted on. But as we were about to enter into another of those narrow galleries which form the communication between the several caves, a sound of voices above, in apparent altercation, arrested our progress. Malvide attempted to rush forward, but the anxious curiosity of the monk kept him stationary, and the leaders also stopt short.

"Not another step will I move—you're choking me—the rope has slipped up upon my throat—murder, murder!" exclaimed the squeaking voice of Monsieur Depourvu.

"Not at all, my dear Sir," said Felix, whom the light of the torch, left in the wall, now discovered, with his back to us as he stood on the platform, hauling up his companion through the cavity—"Not at all—it's absolutely nothing when one's used to it—pray now shove yourself up a little."

"I can't, I won't—I'll stick here, I'm determined on it. A church indeed! a pretty church! Take this infernal bandage off my eyes, Felix—I am sure you are about to murder me—don't pull me so—I am choking—murder, murder!"

But in the last throes the cavity disgorged its unwilling occupant, for he was lugged safely upon the platform, where he immediately sprang upon his feet.

"Where am I, then?" cried he, struggling fiercely with Felix and one of the Spaniards who readjusted the rope round his body. "Tell me where I am; you said we were coming into a church, but you've dragged me into a charnel vault, I'm sure of it. I'm all wet and torn to atoms, in these vile passages. Where am I, Felix?"

"Hold fast by the rope and you'll soon know," replied Felix (who had taken information of the place from his guide,) pushing him clear off the platform ;

and down he came, swinging and screaming with all his might, accompanied by a shriek from Malvide, a burst of hoarse laughter from the Spaniards, above and below, and the loud barking of Ranger, all of which discord was echoed drearily through the cavern.

Even when Depourvu touched the ground he was quite unsatisfied as to his safety. He screamed more violently than before, jumped about, rolled his head from side to side; while loud complaints and curses proclaimed that he believed himself to be actually hanging by his neck, and that he was thus in the very act of being barbarously murdered by Felix and the Spaniard. While one of the soldiers uncorded him and kept him somewhat more quiet, the monk gave the signal for our proceeding into the inner chamber of the vault.

Not a word was spoken that could betray the party to Depourvu. We walked silently forward through the narrow and difficult path, at each side of which was a deep and dark abyss. We proceeded with the greatest caution, for one false step to the right or left would have plunged us into certain destruction. Felix, after some persuasion, prevailed on Depourvu to suffer his eyes to remain bandaged, promising him most faithfully that a few minutes would bring him into the chapel, where he should certainly pounce upon Malvide, in the very fact of matrimony with his Spanish rival. The conversation went on :—

*Depourvu.* Oh, Felix, if I could but be sure of that, I would forgive you all, all this horrid treatment. If I could but catch her in the fact! then my hundred thousand francs would be safe, even though she won't marry me.

*Felix. (eagerly.)* What hundred thousand francs?

Here we all stopped with a simultaneous anxiety

*Depourvu.* Why, the money I lent to the Viscount to be sure—the amount of the bond.

*Felix.* (*recovering himself.*) Ay, Ay, to be sure, that is very true; but what bond?

*Depourvu.* Why, the bond you witnessed, what other?

*Felix.* That *I* witnessed!

*Depourvu.* Come, come, Master Felix, don't be so cunning—It's no use between us. The Vicomte told me that he told you to tell me that he had ~~not~~ told you any thing about it. But I have the bond safe and sound in my port-folio, in this very pocket, for all that.

*Felix.* The devil you have?

*Depourvu.* Ay, snug; and I'll have my money back, every sou, great a fool as he takes me for.

*Felix.* Now, will you do me a favour, Monsieur Depourvu.

*Depourvu.* I'll do any thing on earth, in reason for you, if you'll but show me Malvide and that pale whiskerandos of a Spaniard in the act and fact of being married.

*Felix.* Then I pledge myself to show them to you in less than five minutes, with the priest tying them together, if you will let me see that bond which I never read, though it appears I witnessed it.

*Depourvu.* Appears! Egad, it does plain enough, for your name is to it—Felix Doms—hard enough to read to be sure, for it is a miserable scrawl. Take off the bandage from my eyes, and here is the bond.

*Felix.* No, no. You don't want to see it, and my own eyes will serve *my* purpose—and you know our compact is broken when you are no longer blindfolded.

*Depourvu.* That's very good reasoning, certainly—so here, take it—I trust to your honour.

*Felix.* (*examining the bond.*) What an impudent scrawl, in imitation of my fine running hand—well, I did not think my master was quite such a scoundrel.

*Depourvu.* In imitation! What do you mean by that?

*Felix.* Oh, nothing, nothing at all.

*Depourvu.* And what do you mean by a scoundrel?

*Felix.* Oh, that's less than nothing.

*Depourvu.* Indeed! But you see the clause for repayment?

*Felix. (reading.)* Yes, yes, clear enough. "To be repaid with the hundred thousand francs, the portion of my daughter Malvide, on her marriage with the said Monsieur Depourvu; and if he does not fulfil the said contract of marriage, but marries another person, the said Vicomte d'Euplandre to refund the sum of one hundred thousand francs to said Monsieur Depourvu." Ay, all very clear and explicit.

*Depourvu.* Yes, Felix, you see that, either way, I have secured the repayment of the money—you observe that.

*Felix. (knowingly.)* Neither way, you mean.

*Depourvu. (alarmed.)* Why, what do you mean? Speak out, Felix; pray don't keep me in suspense; and just take this bandage from my eyes.

*Felix.* Do keep cool, my dear Sir, and answer me one question,—who drew out this bond?

*Depourvu.* Who? Why myself to be sure; you know it was all a secret between the Vicomte and myself, and you who witnessed it.

*Felix.* Then I'll tell you what, Monsieur Depourvu, your one hundred thousand francs are utterly lost, and for ever.

*Depourvu.* What, how? What do you mean? Pray take off this infernal bandage, and let me look at you, to see if you are serious.

*Felix.* I'm quite serious, I assure you.

*Depourvu.* Then I'm very seriously ill—so do, like an honest fellow, hold me up awhile, and explain yourself.

*Felix. (supporting him.)* Well, now, listen to

me. You see, in the first place, that had Mademoiselle Malvide married you, the Vicomte's debt was to be paid with the marriage portion ; that is to say, you were to receive the portion in lieu of the debt.

*Depourvu.* Not at all ; at the same time with it.

*Felix.* No, no, to be repaid *with* the marriage portion : not a word of "at the same time ;" but *with*, with the portion Monsieur Depourvu, which means *by* the portion.

*Depourvu.* Do you know, it never struck me in that way.

*Felix.* I dare say, but rely on it, it is the construction of the clause.

*Depourvu.* Then I now finally give up all notion of marrying her—totally—I would not have her if she asked me—I would'nt indeed.

*Felix.* Very well ; but then if she marries another person ?

*Depourvu.* Why, then I get back my money, and that's what I want—I don't want a wife ; I would much rather live single.

*Felix.* But, my good Sir, depend upon it you'll have neither wife nor money, your bond is not worth a *liard*.

*Depourvu.* You don't say so—pray don't! How do you mean, Felix ?

*Felix.* Why, in the first place, being drawn up by yourself, and my name being forged to it, the Vicomte would deny its authenticity, and swear you have fabricated it altogether ; for if he signed this name it is only like a clumsy imitation of his general style of writing—and I firmly believe you would be prosecuted and sent to the galleys for life.

This awful climax produced a really serious effect upon poor Depourvu. He shook as if in an ague, and seemed to breathe with difficulty. We all made signs to Felix to take off his bandage, but he was inexorable to our signals and the sufferer's prayers, and only motioned to us to go on. We obeyed his

signal, for he proved himself so good a general as to be entitled to obedience : and as we moved forward I caught the pleased expression of my companions' countenances, but Malvide's showed, I thought, a feeling of disgrace, and Mèlchior's one of disgust at the discovery of the Vicomte's baseness. We heard Felix following us, step by step with his companion, whose nervous whispers died away in the dark echos of the passage.

We very soon reached the chamber to which the passage led; and the torches, held high up by the attendant soldiers, showed us all that can be seen of this extraordinary place. It differed but little in the appearance usual to such caverns, but, like most others, it was rich in the abounding wonders of Nature's subterranean works. Pillar and arch were there displayed, as if in mockery of art's supposed inventions; and the vaulted roof accorded with the vast yet graceful proportions of the rest. Many fantastic accessories presented themselves—altar, bench, and benitier. On high the columns of impending stalactites, showed what might be thought the pipes of a gigantic organ, and the ear seemed involuntarily listening for some sacred strain. A misty solemnity enveloped the whole of the visible scene; while beyond a broken and perilous causeway, both sight and imagination were baffled in the depths of a yawning and as yet unfathomed gulph.

All in all, it was a place suited for the solemnization of mysterious rites—a rich wrought sanctuary, for the victims, whom persecution might in darker times have driven from the temple raised by man,—and whose faith required a worship place less broadly marked than the mountain side, the forest depths, earth's wide spread surface, and the universal vault of Heaven.

While my eye took in the scene here sketched, the soldiers ranged their torches on what looked an altar; the monk placed himself before it, and drew

forth his book. Malvide and Melchior once more knelt; and Munoz's sonorous voice commenced again the ceremony, which the morning's interruption had left incomplete.

Felix and Depourvu now appeared, the latter stealing in on tiptoe, holding his companion's arm with both hands, and advancing with his right ear foremost, as if that was the side most adapted for catching the priest's accents.

"Aha! they are at it! we have caught them! Oh, my dear Felix—my best, my only friend!" exclaimed he.

"Hush!" murmured Felix, untying the cotton pocket handkerchief, which had been bound round his eyes, "hush! and I will give you ocular proof."

When the bandage fell off, and the glare of the torches flashed upon Depourvu, he looked utterly bewildered and half blinded. He rubbed his eyes; shook his head, and opened his mouth to swallow the reality of what he saw: and when he clearly distinguished what appeared to him an indubitable church, the monk in his canonicals, book in hand, and the grim-looking attendants who surrounded the torch-lit altar, he dropped down on his knees, in a fit of mingled piety and fright, uttering loud thanksgivings for his present safety, and prayers for his future preservation. But Felix whispered a few cabalistical words into his ear, and he instantly jumped up on his feet, clapped his hands loudly together, and cried out,

"Certainly, to be sure, without doubt, with the greatest pleasure—I shall be charmed, enchanted."

"Enough, enough," said Felix, putting his hand across Depourvu's mouth, from which, imperfect repetitions of his delighted compliance, burst forth through the prison bars of Felix's fingers.

"Enough, I tell you!" exclaimed Felix, stamping fiercely, and frowning like the keeper of some half-tamed animal—"leave the rest to me."

He then advanced towards the monk, and said, loud enough to be heard by Depourvu,

"Most reverend father, and you, Sir, and Made-moiselle, excuse my interruption; but permit me to offer, on the part of Monsieur Depourvu, his anxious request that you will suffer him to fill the station which this lady's father has abandoned, and which no such old and faithful friend as he is, is here to occupy. He proposes to himself, in short, the honour of giving her away."

Through the compliance given instantly to this proposal by the three persons applied to, I plainly saw the workings of dissatisfaction at the rather degrading necessity which forced them to accept it. I myself could not help shrinking from the mockery which Depourvu was about to enact—but I saw that the others as well as myself were deeply impressed with the importance of his being involved so thoroughly, by this voluntary relinquishment of his own claim, and the sanction afforded to Melchior's having replaced him.

The ceremony therefore went on without one dissentient voice. Malvide and Melchior were joined to each other for ever, and Depourvu gave away the treasure, with as much alacrity as if he had been throwing away a plague.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

THE knot which ties a hero and heroine together, too often unravels the interest which the story-teller has been endeavouring to wind up. As nearly as possible to that point, then he should stop. All readers like to have something left to the imagination; and what so generally pleasing to speculate on as the



joys of the newly married—their dangers and difficulties over; for though such may even then appear palpable to common observers, they have no existence for *them*. Leaving, then, the now hallowed mysteries of Sarrancolin to the occupation of these their sole possessors, I will beg my readers to accompany me on a mission of no small importance,—which I undertook at the united solicitation of all the party, and in which, at my suggestion, Monsieur Depourvu and Felix bore a part. This was no other than an embassy of explanation and conciliation to the Vicomte d'Euplandre.

I shall not dwell on the details of this somewhat delicate undertaking. I got through the task to the best of my ability, and only lamented that that did not equal my zeal. But, considering all circumstances, I procured tolerably good terms for the friends I represented, and whose cause I pleaded. I proceeded to the Vicomte's residence near Toulouse; and, introduced by Felix, seconded by Depourvu, I detailed the particulars of the union, which no opposition was able to prevent, and which it was now vain to endeavour to annul. I found myself listened to with a degree of patience which I had not looked for; and I discovered the Vicomte to be one of those reasonable persons who submit patiently when resistance is vain, and who put on smiles when nothing is to be gained by frowns. He was, therefore, not inflexible to my remonstrances, and he consented to forgive Malvide, though he persisted in condemning her conduct. He also very clearly proved his honesty, by refunding Monsieur Depourvu's one hundred thousand francs (which he had only borrowed as a kind of pledge for his completing his offer of marriage with Malvide;) and he strengthened Felix's assertions of his own cleverness by confirming the confession of the latter that he had denied his signature as witness to the bond, merely as a trick to frighten Depourvu into a belief of fraud, and a

participation in the marriage rites. The *honourable* nature of the Vicomte's intentions was made evident to me, and I was fain to take that conviction as sufficient grounds for giving a portion of esteem to a character in which I could find nothing more to demand admiration or excite regard. However, as human nature is too often found, the Vicomte might hold his head as high as his fellows.

Malvide's mother readily joined in my efforts to propitiate the severer parent, who was reasonable enough to make a merit of compliance with entreaties he could no longer resist. My visit to the Château of d'Euplandre was thus one of pleasure to myself and the great majority of the party concerned; and a full and free pardon was the next day despatched to Sarrancolin by the indefatigable Felix, I staying behind, at the earnest invitation of the Vicomte, to assist in preparations for the reception of the bride and bridegroom, and for the solemnization of the *civil* part of the ceremony, without which the matter-of-fact observances of French forms in such cases would be incomplete.

In due course of time Don Melchior and Malvide arrived at the paternal mansion; and with as little delay as was consistent with the requisite rules, the engagement already sanctified by religion was sanctioned by law. Malvide's beautiful head was bound in its bridal wreath of orange flowers, emblematic of the fragrant blossoming of joy within her heart. The young couple hurried off immediately to Paris, anxiously escaping from the cold quarantine of etiquette, to which new married happiness is too commonly condemned in France. Felix was added to their establishment, at his and their joint request, their confidence and his fidelity being thus mutually guaranteed and rewarded.

Monsieur Depourvu retired into the solitude of unwedded life, well pleased at having escaped the risks of matrimony, with security to the *other* mo-

ney which had been, as he thought, in such jeopardy. I never happened to hear whether or not he again tried the perils of courtship, and am thus forced to hand him fairly over as another subject of interest to the "imagination of the reader."

After the departure of Don Melchior and his bride, there was nothing left to detain me in the part of France to which they and their adventures had hitherto imparted a charm. The whole horizon of politics was obscured, and little hope could be rationally entertained that the frontier line would be much longer held sacred. Winter was fast approaching, and all inducements to a prolonged stay in the neighbourhood of the Pyrenees were daily decreasing. I therefore finally turned my back on the magnificent mountains, the first appearance of which had excited such lively sensations of admiration, and where I had at intervals passed so many days of adventurous delight. I parted from them as from a home, and my mind turns at times to their recollection with feelings almost domestic.

Father Munoz, still wildly enthusiastic in the cause of bigotry and despotism, returned again to the scene of his former operations. Having fulfilled, with that sublimity of devotion of which enthusiasts alone are susceptible, the duties so loudly claimed by friendship, and which were silently prompted by the other mysterious passion that he scarcely ventured to recognize, he felt that he could devote himself wholly to the mighty slavery in which he was self-enthralled. He passed some months in organizing a large body of the scattered wretches whose former ruin he had shared, and at their head he returned in the following spring into the unfortunate land of his birth, leading on the invaders, before whose irresistible march the hopes of freedom were for a long enduring season crushed.

This woeful consummation realized, Munoz once more laid down his sword, and retired to his re es-

established convent, to display that mixture of worth with fanaticism so injurious to the character of true virtue, by giving it the appearance of *relationship* with the evil to which it is only *allied*.

About the period at which the monk thus returned to the comparative seclusion of his convent I happened to be in Paris, and I heard of his retirement from public life in the following manner. Walking on the Boulevards alone, a group of officers of a regiment just returned from Spain approached me. One of them sprang forward, with infinite agility and somewhat of a theatrical air, enfolded me in his arms, and impressed on either cheek a most cordial salutation from his moustached and whiskered countenance. His epaulette struck me in the eye, and his hat fell upon the ground. I quickly recognized my old friend, Serjeant Passepartout, in his well-earned promotion to the rank of sub-lieutenant; and I gazed with pleasure on the ribbon of the Legion of Honour which protruded puffingly from his button-hole. He briefly sketched to me the rapid campaign of the French army, their bravery and moderation. I acknowledged the truth of all he said, and sorrowfully thought of the results of their triumphs. "As for me," said he, "I fought my way straight forward, going out of it a little at times for the sake of the dear creatures whom I took *en Echelon*. I did some things which my colonel approved—he recommended me to the general—and the latter asked me whether I would have an epaulette or the cross?\*

"Neither, General," said I, "until I am entitled to both—and *pardi*, my friend, you see I have got both!"

A few details about Munoz, and some extracts from the journal of his own amours closed our conference. I wished him joy of his promotion, and a continuance of good luck in love and war; and I left him

\* The decoration of the Legion of Honour.

to the indulgence of what he had already obtained. But I must go back a little to persons and scenes of greater interest.

Don Melchior gradually recovered from the effects of the villain Sanchez's poignard. He awaited in Paris the last hour of hope for the neutrality of France in the coming contest, of which Spain was to be the theatre and her sons the actors. He watched with ardent anxiety the progress of every measure of conciliation on the one hand, and of repulsive disdain on the other. He could make no allowance in that moment of excitement—and what friend of freedom could?—for the secret instinct which might have whispered the court of the Tuilleries that its very existence was at stake, and that to temporize was to be lost—that every thing must be ventured and a blow boldly struck, even though the first principles of liberty were the victims.

Melchior viewed, in the bitterness of his feelings, but one aspect of this double-faced transaction. He execrated the principles, and he wished to defy the power that was in march against his country. He looked on the troops that were intended for its invasion with real aversion and would-be contempt—and remembering only what the French guards had been when he served in them himself, he gazed on them now with feelings as violent as they were in truth unjust; for soldiers must strike when governments command, and if military force deliberates, civil freedom is lost.

Melchior outstaid the departure of the Ambassador of Constitutional Spain; he attended the review of the French troops, destined for the final re-enforcements, on the arrival of which at the frontier, the *cordon sanitaire* was to commence its fatal inroad, and in the bitterness of his heart he wrote some verses during his preparations, on that last day, for quitting Paris, as he vowed for ever. These I have translated as follows, using a liberty with them as if

they were my own, by suppressing one or two passages which subsequent circumstances proved to be individually unjust.

ON THE MARCH OF THE FRENCH GUARDS FOR  
THE INVASION OF SPAIN.

There they stand in their triple ranks,  
In the Bourbon palace yard;  
Playthings for each new tyrant's pranks,  
Slaves, soldiers, hirelings, Gauls or Franks,  
The Bourbon royal guard.

I saw them once, when *another* name  
Flung its mighty shadow o'er;  
When these sons of war were heirs of fame,  
And glory's rays, not the rust of shame,  
Were spread on the chains they bore.

How different was their bearing then  
To their crest-fallen brows to-day!  
They looked as they ne'er shall look again,  
Like demi-gods more than mortal men,  
Drawn out in their fierce array.

By heavens, 'twas grand to see them spring  
Elastic from the ground,  
And to hear the wide courts echoing  
As they yelled the name of their Emperor king,  
And the clash of their arms went round.

And they seemed, as they waved their helms on high,  
And swung their glittering blades,  
And swept in clouds their chieftain by,  
Less things of the world than spirits of the sky,  
Or warriors from the shades.

While HE, as he sat on his war-horse there,  
Wrapped in his shroud of pride,  
Might be thought some demon of the air,  
In the gloomy grandeur of despair,  
The whirlwind's course to guide.

And is that fearful pageant gone,  
Has it vanished from the earth,  
Have the thousands that then rushed wildly on,  
Sunk in the grave with the mighty one  
Who gave their terrors birth?

And what are those ranks that I gaze on now?  
And whose is yon shrivelled form,

That shivering stands, with creaking bow,  
Like a dripping bird on some vessel's prow,  
That heralds yet hides from the storm.

Not a shout is raised, not a feeble smile  
Plays over one lowering front,  
Not a joke goes round the hours to beguile,  
Not a prayer is breathed from a single file  
That must brave the battle's brunt.

And mark! they move, with slogging tramp,  
Hollow, and dull, and slow,  
The ground gives back the heavy stamp  
Of limbs, whose nerves seemed coiled with cramp,  
So limping and lame they go.

And whither go they?—Ha, hold your sides,  
Each laughter-loving fiend  
That plunges men down fate's whelming tides,  
That tears young bridegrooms from their brides,  
That mocks, in storm-clouds screened,

At all the miseries of mankind,  
Drifting on passion's seas,  
Like a rudderless bark before the wind,  
When despots dark and bigots blind  
Urge on such things as these.

Let every urchin sprite laugh out,  
That sports with mortal's pain,  
While demons dire send back the shout,  
Fierce bursting round the inglorious rout  
That goes to conquer Spain!!

Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!  
The demon-chorus flies,  
Hurra! hurra! hurra! hurra!  
Echoes o'er Spain, while the loud huzza!  
Of her legioned hosts replies,

"Come on," they cry, "ye men of France,  
"Come tyrants with your hordes!  
"Fit light shall shine o'er your advance,  
"Liberty's broad and burning glance,  
"And the gleam from freeman's swords.

"Fit welcome shall wait on each mountain height,  
"Strong arms, and new-dug graves,  
"And your requiem song be the croaking flight  
"Of eagles, and ravens, and birds of the night,  
"O'er the carcasses of slaves!

From the first skirmish on the banks of the Bidasoa till the last assault against the ramparts of Cadiz, Don Melchior was one of the foremost to oppose the invaders. I had several letters from him during this career of dismal glory, amid the fluctuations of hope and despondency. He clung wildly to the first, while even one shred remained. But the energies of Spain were paralyzed under the withering influences of bigotry, and her patriots were scattered before its baneful breath. Riego, the brightest, the purest of them all, hung as a vile felon in the polluted streets of the capital he had entered a hero, and the hearts of all that were liberal in Europe sickened with sorrow and swelled with indignation at the news.

From that sad moment the political mind contained no atmosphere in which hope for Spain could breathe. It was stifled perhaps to rise again! But the chequered ray of freedom which gleamed on her for awhile, showed the glorious aspect of a just revolution, rising in simple grandeur, upheld by dignified moderation, and sinking undefiled by crime—a fine inheritance to the days to come! a splendid contrast to that of France, that frantic burst of national despair, whose fatal example, by terrifying half the world with the memory of its horrors, ensures the degradation of the other, from apprehension of their return.

But the revolution of Spain has gone far to counteract this effect; and after-ages will look back to it, as the model for those up-risings against the abuse of power, of which the weakness of human natures causes the too frequent necessity. It is for us to do honour to those immortal men who proved that success is not necessary to constitute a hero; and in freely granting to them that proud title, I need not supplicate for *mine* the honour that is shared by all who perished nobly in battle or suffered gloriously in exile.



of her? Will they ask who shared his peril  
participates in his happiness? Who soothed  
grief in defeat, and brightened the triumph  
victories? Who wandered with him hand in hand  
felt with him heart in heart—and reposes with  
side by side?

## NOTE.

THE *Cagots* of all France must have had a common origin. Some one great cause must have banished and fixed them to the most obscure and barren places. Some signal act of vengeance, some wide-spreading, national outlawry, must at once have aimed at the very extermination of the whole. Whether sudden, or continuous, it must have been great and general; imprinting at once upon all France the same sentiments of hatred, fixing on the proscribed the stamp of the same reprobation, and loading them with the opprobrium of a common name, the universal signal of horror and contempt.

But examining the causes to which this fate was formerly ascribed, it can scarcely be believed that these poor people owe their existence to a tribe of Lepers, banished from the haunts of health and happiness. Lepers were frequently exiled, and confined within the limits of their own infection, but never sold or bequeathed. Nor is it probable that they are descended from a portion of the Gauls, reduced to this state of debasement by the barbarians who succeeded the Roman power. Under the Goths and Franks, the condition of the Gauls presented nothing like this state of unmitigated infamy. It is the aversion that remains to be explained, not the tyranny. Slaves may be spurned, but the *Cagot* was proscribed. It is the mixture of vengeance and contempt, which is so inexplicable; for cruelty is commonplace; and hatred, like the eagle that carries up its prey, to dash it down to a more certain death, seems to elevate the object it is about to destroy. The misery in question must have had its source in some feeling more deep and deadly than is to be fathomed by vulgar conjecture, or ambiguous research. It is therefore that all authorities are unanimous in ascribing it to the effect of some such event as the conflict of two ferocious nations—a barbarous invasion punished by barbarians—or the terrible reaction of slavery against oppression.

But five centuries of massacres and devastation, rife with bloody battles, oppressions, and treasons, where crimes and miseries succeeded each other in atrocious monotony, leave all in doubt and confusion, as to the epoch or the event. The east, the north, and south had in their turns, poured upon Gaul a multitude of hordes, all sprung from Upper Asia, but subdivided and modified, and at length utterly forgetting their common origin and relationship. Of these barbarians, the last which burst from their eastern homes were the most barbarous. They pressed on those which went immediately before, who in their turn drove on their predecessors. Alani, and Suevi, and Vandals, gave place to the Goths and Franks; and

stopped by the Western Ocean, they doubled back upon their course and ravaged Gaul. The Huns came next, accompanied by the Herules, new tribes of Alani, and another race of Suevi. All were confounded together in Gaul, which seemed to be the boundary of their incursions. Then from the North came the Saxons; new Vandals from their side; and the people of Germany, the most confused mixture of all these confused masses, precipitated themselves into the universal tumult; and the divisions, dispersions, annihilations, and reproductions of races were complete.

At length, an issue was discovered on the side of Spain. A furious torrent of men rushed out between the Pyrenées and the Mediterranean; and in the midst of new massacres and new confusion, they found out the road to Africa, where they came into contact with the Romans, battled successfully against the last struggles of their power, and reposed on the ruins of their Empire, when a fresh inundation burst from the south upon the west. The ferocious Vandals, now emasculated by pleasure, wealth, and luxury, were shaken and overthrown; while the Moors, following up their course, swept before them the Goths of Spain, and, led by the fierce and redoubtable Ben Nazir, fell with their whole weight on the Empire of the Franks, by whom they were finally checked and overthrown.

And which, amongst this multitude of tribes, must be selected as that which has been condemned to bear, for generation after generation, the progressive miseries and marks of degradation? Hardly may we distinguish by the flickering lights of history, the victors in these perpetual conflicts—how then are we to trace the ruins of the vanquished? Does the outlawed caste which we now treat of descend from the remnant of the 300,000 men reputed to have been slain in the rains of Orleans in 451, when the Huns and Ostrogoths were destroyed or dispersed by the Visigoths, the Gauls and Franks?—or from the Visigoths, defeated twelve years later by Childeric?—or from the fugitives of the memorable battle of Vouglé, in 507, which cemented the foundations of the throne of Clovis?—or finally, from the deplorable remains of the multitude of Saracens, almost annihilated in the eighth century, by Charles Martel, in the neighbourhood of Tours?

These are the questions successively propounded by the authors who have given their attention to this interesting, but hopeless speculation. Opinion may fix itself with equal probability on any one of these transactions. The theatre of all these grand defeats was near the centre and western parts of France, giving equal facilities to the different directions which the vanquished followed in their respective flights. The number of the combatants on all these occasions renders conceivable, at least, the extent of country covered by their dispersion. The general feeling which animated France, upon the occasion of these momentous events, may explain the equality of wretchedness entailed upon each separate portion of the proscribed. But difficulties arise in the various natures of the different sufferers in these defeats, which forbid the application of the same reasoning to all of them alike.

It would too much extend the subject, which this brief sketch is intended to simplify and not confuse, were I to transcribe the vari-

ious reasonings which exist upon each favourite opinion, which gives the preference in this inquiry to the Goths, the Alani, or the Moors.

The total incertitude in which the question is enfolded renders it one of hopeless investigation, and the only object to be gained in pursuing it is amusement, at the proofs which each writer discovers for his favourite theory, and the objections he invents to that of his opponents. No glory can be at any rate acquired for these unfortunate people in proving them descendants of any race from whom they *must* have degenerated, and a mass of retrospective disgrace must be thrown upon the memory of any people, in supposing them at any time to have borne such a possible debasement.

END OF THE CAGOT'S HUT.



## SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING.

"Is this a dream, now, after my first sleep? or are these  
phant'sies made i' the light heart?"

BEN JONSON'S *New Inn*.



# SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING.

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## CHAPTER I.

SINCE I first began to use my pen for the purpose of scribbling for the public, one of my most ardent wishes has been to write a Ghost Story; but I have been long withheld, by a notion that the supernatural was worn out, as a means not merely of terror, but of entertainment. It still, no doubt, possesses among my contemporaries many powerful supporters; but reason seems fast exercising the spirits engendered by imagination, and the millennium of good sense—or perhaps of common place—has fairly commenced upon earth. It is certain that the marvellous has lost its sway among us. A religion, severe in proportion to its purity, has shattered the prism which showed us, in a thousand varying colours, the brilliant fancies of the old mythology. The fictions of the middle ages, too, creations of popular credulity, rather than of religious awe, illusions less imposing but far more pleasing, lose, in the hands of modern writers, all their grace and elasticity. They become the inanimate puppets of a showman, not ærial beings of the brain—degenerate offspring of a celestial race, which seems ill at ease in the lowly habitations of mortality.

The secret is, that we have lost our faith in those charming superstitions; the materialized enjoyments of the times no longer sympathize with the phantoms of romance; and the author who would weave



a web of magic, in which he has no belief, must manage with a heavy touch the vapoury essences of fairy land. I confess myself to observe the change with regret; for I consider superstition, in all its modified forms, to be widely distinct from *ignorance*, inasmuch as it has been shared by many of the wisest and most learned; and I look on it as one of the safest minor means for the government of what must ever be a large portion of mankind. A superstition of some sort, seems a natural want of the mind; and the history of human nature proves the continual changes of the object, but no abatement of the principle. But a grosser species of enchantment than spirits or genii, is required to charm the incredulity of the sceptic world *we* move in; and the austerity of knowledge, which disdains the array of goblin impositions, is not proof against that dread of spectral agency, which religion sanctifies, and at which even philosophy involuntarily shudders. Trusting, then, to the existence of this instinct, interwoven with our nature, I venture to record the progress of a story, full of mystery, not merely superhuman, but of that tangible texture which arouses all our flesh-and-blood sensibilities.

The heavy tongue of the cathedral clock had just struck nine, when I entered the town of La Rochelle, in that part which joins the sea, on the road from Rochefort. It was late in the month of November, with neither moon nor stars to light my path. A westerly wind, blowing strongly from the ocean, joined itself with the hoarse voice of the tide, upon the huge mound that protects the harbour, and, rushing through the town, swung to and fro the large lanterns, suspended at long intervals across the streets, making their lights flicker dismally, and their fastenings creak like the chains of a gibbet. Every thing was an illustration of the dreary animation of a country town at night, in the fall of the year. The shop-doors were closed; but a drowsy

lamp or candle (here and there) half betrayed the miserable merchandize within. A couple of carts were dragged heavily over the pavement, by horses which seemed to walk in their sleep; and a few straggling old women, or tired artisans, were plodding along in search of their supper or their homes. The streets were dirty, and in the centre of one of them a poor little Savoyard was grinding the mournful discord of his viol before a solitary house, which, by its paucity of lights, gave no symptoms of society within.

I never saw altogether a more perfect picture of dreariness. A town wholly uninhabited would have been less painfully so. Even the wild marshes I had been shooting across till sunset were less desolate, for their fancy had full play—but *here* imagination lay utterly stagnant. Ranger, who had joyously bounded and frolicked all day, got close to me, as we entered this cheerless place, and he and I trudged along in silent and dull companionship.

Being quite a stranger to the town, it was mere chance that led me to the quay; and the first decent looking inn which caught my eye being situated there, I was not long in choosing my quarters for the night. It was not that the aspect of the house was peculiarly inviting, for it looked lonely enough, and of the second or third rate order of *auberge*; but I was fatigued, and out of spirits for the more bustling scenes of those houses where diligences, patachees, and other public conveyances, are wont to stop. A quiet bed and a good night's rest were more to my mind than seeking adventures or observing characters; so I walked into the kitchen, which opened upon the gateway and had its windows fronting the quay.

The air of this room was peculiarly cheerless and oppressive. It was lighted by one tall dim candle, standing on a table in a corner. There was a wretched fire in the wide hearth, at one side of which do-

and a fat old woman of about sixty years of age; and at the other a man, full one third older, emaciated, and sickly looking, was fast asleep, bent down almost into the ill-burning fagots, which cast their faint glare on his white cotton nightcap and wrinkled face. I paused for a while near the door, uncertain that I had not mistaken the private residence of a forlorn old couple for a house of public resort. But on looking inquiringly round the room, I observed a man lying on a bench. He was also apparently asleep; but on observing my hesitation, he said, in a careless way, "Come in, Sir, come in, don't be afraid."

Upon this invitation I walked forward, and took possession of an arm chair which stood before the fire. The man who addressed me stood up, and came yawning forward.

"Can I have a bed here for the night, my friend?" asked I.

"You must be a stranger in La Rochelle to ask that question," replied he; "you may have seven very good ones if you want them."

"What, is your house quite empty?"

"With the exception of yourself and the family, I hope." There was a careless sort of significance in this reply that did not strike me much at the time; and I remarked to the man that every thing I saw in the house bore the appearance of great drowsiness.

"No wonder," replied he; "this is the third night of watching, and nothing is come yet." The last words were accompanied by a sleepy smile, and my notion was that they must bear some allusion to the arrival of those smuggling boats, which come constantly into the harbours on the French western coast, and for the crews of which the house seemed quite suited. My companion, on the present occasion, was a kind of sailor-like person, half-waiter, half master, and, as I supposed, could be only the

son of the old people by the fire-side. He was middle aged, nearer forty-five and forty, rough handed and awkward, as if pulling a rope was more natural to him than cleaning a plate; yet he set rather briskly to work in a little room inside the kitchen, making preparations for my supper, which I begged him to busy himself about immediately.

The clatter of the crockery, which was thus called into requisition, aroused the old woman from her slumber, and she stared with an apparent mixture of astonishment and pleasure to see a guest about to sup in her house. She bounced up and bustled about, making me a thousand civil speeches and apologies for having been caught napping; and her pleasure seemed increased tenfold, when, in a whispered communication from the man, she learned that I had actually engaged my lodgings for the night. Then began in downright earnest the busy stir of preparation. Frying-pans, warming-pans, plates, dishes, sheets and bolsters, severally and collectively engaged the attention of my hostess. It was not easy to guess in what order she classified her ideas, or whether eating or sleeping, the supper-table or the bed-chamber, claimed precedence. In the midst of the din, which need not have been greater had a dozen guests unexpectedly arrived, the antiquated master of the house unconsciously occupied his corner; but a short thickset woman, formed pretty nearly on the same model as her mistress, and on whose plump cheeks the feet of time had begun to leave slight traces, came into the kitchen, winking and rubbing her eyes, and adjusting her cap and kerchief, as if she, like the others, had been roused from a snatched and comfortless repose.

As she entered, and encountered the bustling landlady, and her own busy husband, for such the man turned out to be, she stared as if she saw the wonders of a dream; and her astonishment was most audibly expressed, when she learned in her turn that I

had ordered supper for *two* and a bed for *one*. Not to be behind hand in this moment of employment, she seized a pair of bellows, and began puffing at the several stems of young trees, which lay at almost their full and natural length across the huge hearth. Now, I dare say not one of my readers has failed to remark, what I have so often observed, the contagious inclination, which seems common to all mankind on such occasions, to seize the bellows out of the hands of one another, and aid in making or marring the fire. Whence comes this puffing propensity, or why it should be contagious I do not stop to inquire; but for my own part I was quite sure, when this woman took hold of the bellows, that they would not be suffered to remain long in her hands. And scarcely had she applied them to the fire, when her husband threw a longing glance at her occupation, and almost immediately abandoning his own, he flung his handful of knives, forks, and spoons upon the table, and gently snatched the asthmatic implement from the grasp of his helpmate.

"Come, come, my dear," cried he, "let me save you that trouble. Do you give the gentleman's dog his supper, and I'll soon make a blazing fire." And he puffed away accordingly.

She reluctantly resigned; but scarcely had he commenced his operations, when his mistress turned sharply round from the large press, filled with linen, at which she was occupied, and, following the common attraction, placed herself beside the self-satisfied fire-maker, and briskly divested him of the wind instrument whose harmonies had brought her to the spot.

"There, there, that will do very well," said the hostess; "do you make ready the table while your wife airs the sheets, and let me settle these cross-grained fagots—I know how to make them burn"—and to work she went, puffing away care from the pipe of the bellows.

But scarcely had she begun, when a shrivelled hand, feebly stretched forth from the chimney-corner, felt gropingly in the direction of the sounds, and a tremulous voice exclaimed,

"Give them to me, give them to me; I have nothing else to do, my love; trust to me for making the dampest log burn brightly."

The old dame, in evident disappointment, but good natured withal, yielded to the desire of her superannuated spouse, and placed in his trembling hands the means of producing the popular air he sighed for. "Verily," soliloquized I, "the love of bellows-blowing *must* be an instinct—for what else could reconcile its followers to the furnace heat of a forge, the monotony of an organ loft, or the perusal of a lottery advertisement? Puff, puff, puff! seems a vital impulse of existence, and comes naturally to almost every man, whether he be or be not trumpeter, poet, or pastry cook!" and I ended my monologue, by mechanically withdrawing the universal instrument from the unconscious hold of my old neighbour, and I forthwith began to prove myself no exception to the rule I had lain down, as applying to mankind in general.

By the time I had succeeded in producing a conflagration among the fagots, which had so long lain fuming and spluttering before me, Ranger had, under the auspices of the younger woman, made an excellent repast, and mine was quite ready for consumption. The glare from the hearth, threw a deep red tinge on all around. Although the old man was evidently fire-proof, his cheeks were scorched into bloom. The hostess looked ruddier than ever, and her assistants were glowing from the efforts of cookery.

All the insect ornaments of the kitchen were warmed into life by the inspiring flame, and various domestic implements of brass and copper seemed to dance in their dusky corners, while the blaze fell

flickering on them, and caused momentary intervals of light and shade. An old upright clock, of English form and prodigious stature, was brought into full relief. Its pendulum waved pompously backwards and forwards, made evident through the oblong oval of a glass window; and the dim dial-plate was surmounted by a broad white sun, whose ghastly disk looked more like a death's head grinning down into the room. The walnut-tree furniture was old but well preserved. There was an air of serious regularity altogether about the place that looked unnatural at an inn, and was therefore displeasing; and the total absence of every thing, young or sportive—for there was not as much as a kitten by the chimney-side, or a parrot above it—completed the comfortless want of the associations that seem naturally allied with a house of *entertainment*.

Notwithstanding the good fire, I felt chilly, and in spite of the good cheer, unrefreshed. I had the little table brought from the parlour into the kitchen, and I did my best to be sociable. But my own efforts had no external support. The people around me were dull and drowsy. The place was desolate; Ranger slept, and by the time I had finished my bottle of Bourdeaux wine, and my liqueur glass of *Cogniac*, a century old, my eyes and those of the skull-faced sun which ornamented the clock, were the only ones in the room that were not fast closed.

Resolved to break away from the heavy spell which bound me, I roused the waiter from his doze, and requested his wife to prepare my bed-room. She started at the sound, looked incredulous a moment, but, recollecting herself, proceeded to carry up stairs the sheets, warming-pan, etcetera. When she had reached half way up the flight of steps that communicated with the inner room, she turned round, and with a countenance deadly pale, inquired of her husband, "if he was not coming with her?"

"Poh! poh!" replied he, with the same sort of

smile which I had before remarked; "can't you go up alone?"

"*Alone!*" echoed she. "Come, come, my dear, for heaven's sake, I am ready to faint with fright."

"Well, well, here I am, my girl," said he, reassuringly, and he accompanied her up stairs, with a bundle of wood under his arm.

I should mention here that, while supper was in preparation, a good deal of conversation was kept up between mistress, maid, and man, which, from the rattling of keys, and the frequent mention of "the green chamber," I concluded, and, as it turned out correctly, to have reference to the room which I was to occupy.

After a little time, feeling quite overcome, I prepared to follow the servants; and though I moved as lightly as possible, with only Ranger's silken footsteps at my heel, I awoke the old landlady, who stared wide at me once more, on perceiving the route I was taking. "Good night, Sir, God bless you!" said she, with an emphasis that would have suited a farewell to a man setting out on a perilous voyage; and she added, in a more housewife-like key, addressing her servants or her *children*—I did not then know which, for the epithet was not decisive—"Come, my children, light the gentleman to his room—to the green chamber, mind. Good night, Sir; God bless you, and watch over you!"

"Amen!" uttered the feeble voice of the octogenaire by the fire-side; and, as well as I can recollect at this distance of time, I felt an involuntary thrill, as if the faint tone went piercingly and supernaturally through me. But I am rarely subject to such fancies, and they made no impression then.

Lighted up stairs, and conducted by man and *maid*—as we must, by courtesy, call the younger dame—(the hostess having shudderingly replied to my half-joking invitation that she would escort me,



and lay down, proving that he was only recognizing a bed, instead of tracing an analogy. I took the hint, however; dismissed my attendants, cut short their civilities, and was soon stretched within the canopy of green curtains.

The beds in France are all excellent; I know of no exceptions. Woollen mattresses are quite soft enough, without the suffocating and lumpy inequalities of a feather bed; and sufficiently firm, without the crisp and prickly annoyances of a hair-stuffed couch. I should, therefore, I am sure, have slept well through the night in question, had it not been impossible to get a pillow, a very common want in French inns, and I found a tight-covered log-like bolster as complete a murderer of sleep as "Macbeth," or a guilty conscience. I closed my eyes, but to open them again; tossed and turned from side to side; shook the blankets, and beat the hard-hearted bolster; but all ended in broken slumbers, and a crick in my neck.

If the French had not notoriously a horror of fresh air, one might suppose, from the construction of their houses, that they held it in great honour, for the most hospitable facilities are afforded to give it the *entrée* at all parts. It whistled carelessly through a dozen apertures in "the green chamber;" and, after a short time, finding the key-holes inconvenient channels of communication, it forced the door by which I entered from the corridor (which according, to my general practice, I had not bolted), and another also that opened upon a back stair-case, leading from the court-yard to the garrets. The creaking of these doors was a dubois lullaby; and I experienced that strange laziness, which sometimes creeps upon us when half asleep, and which prevents the momentary exertion that would remove the obstacle to perfect repose—such as a want of sufficient covering on a cold night, or the closing of a window-shutter or a door, on a windy one, like that in question.

Instead of boldly getting out of bed, I only strove to shut out the interruption with the blankets, and in this imperfect security I continued my attempts, to sleep. The house was completely quiet; not a whisper from below was to be heard; and at last, in despite of all impediments, I sunk into forgetfulness. I must have slept some time, for on opening my eyes, and turning them towards the fire-place, I saw that the fagots were completely reduced to ashes, which emitted just light enough to show the floor and the wainscot in the immediate neighbourhood of the chimney. I cannot say what awoke me. I supposed at the moment it was merely the uncomfortable position of my head, but I am not *now* quite sure of that. Be that as it may, and imperfectly awake as I was, I distinguished a short breathing, and observed a figure standing near the fire-place imperfectly shadowed out by the light of the expiring embers. Putting my hand quietly out of bed, I placed it on my gun, which stood close by, and I saw the figure deliberately open a small cupboard, which almost touched the chimney. It closed it soon again; and as neither the opening or shutting made the least noise, I concluded the hinges to have been more carefully oiled than those of larger dimensions, the creaking of which had been all night annoying me.

Being a little impatient, or perhaps I may say nervous, at this silent visitation, I was just going to invoke the intruder in no set phrase, when a dying gleam from the chimney showed him to be very distinctly, as I thought, the spare emaciated form of the poor old man whom I had left so snugly by the fire-side in the kitchen. I did not see his face sufficiently to justify me in swearing to his identity; but at the time I had no notion but that it was he; and supposing that he was harmlessly wandering about the hoose, as old people are so wont to do in their accustomed localities, I let go my gun, turned on

the other side, and strove to sleep again. In a moment or two I started up on feeling something gently touching my feet, and putting out my hand, I found it was Ranger, who was creeping up on the bed, and trembling violently, from the cold of his former couch, as I *then* supposed.

I looked sharply through the opening of the curtains, but could see nothing; I listened, but caught no sound; so, concluding that the old gentleman had quietly made his exit, the way by which he came, I patted Ranger's back, lay down again, and finished my imperfect sleep, from which I again opened my unrefreshed lids, just as the first grey gleam of morn was coming through the window, unobstructed by a shutter, and stealing faintly into the chamber through the moth-eaten woollen curtain.

I sprang out of bed, glad to find that *my* hour of rest was come, for my night had harassed me sadly; and I went to the window to ascertain the state of the weather. Upon drawing the window-curtain I saw with some surprise that both doors of the room were closed, and I wondered for an instant how my nocturnal visiter could have so nicely acquired the secret of shutting them without noise. Looking through the window, which opened upon the back premises of the house, I could distinguish nothing in the misty air but a straggling mass of offices, ill-built and ruinous; and I was turning round towards my bed again, when something moving across the yard fixed my attention, and I clearly perceived the same figure which had entered my room during the night, slowly bend its steps towards the most distant part of the out-house, that seemed, as well as I could trace its appearance, a kind of barn or granary. "What a perturbed old animal!" thought I; "it is more like a ghost than a man."

This thought had scarce had mental utterance when the figure, having reached the barn, stopped suddenly, turned round its head towards me as I

thought and disappeared instantaneously. My eyes vainly strained after it through the haze. I breathed upon and wiped the dust covered pane, but to no purpose; and briefly wondering what the superannuated wanderer could be about, I lay down again in my bed, impatient of a rational hour for rising.

The light came creepingly across the floor and wall, and at length it filled the room. Tired of lying sleeplessly and unoccupied in bed, a situation which some people like, but which is to me always irksome, I definitively arose at about eight o'clock, and as no one seemed stirring in the house, I wrapped my flannel dressing-gown about me and walked down stairs in search of warm water and breakfast. When I got into the kitchen all was dark, beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the door by which I entered. I heard a quartetto of snoring, in different tones, but I could see nothing. Groping my way forward, I came in direct contact with a table, from which my hand swept off a bottle which came to the floor and broke in pieces. At the sound, and catching a glimpse of my scarce visible figure, three of the sleepers started up—the man with a convulsive oath, the women with shrieks. The latter hid their faces, as I quickly perceived, when the man, more rational, flew to the window and threw wide the shutters, and when he found it was I that had alarmed them he burst into a loud laugh. His wife and mistress, (no insinuation against his morality) echoed his laugh faintly, but pleasedly—and I confess I started, I know not exactly with what feeling, when I observed the old man, fast asleep, and occupying precisely the station in which I had left him dozing the preceding night!

The busy stir of the others soon, however, called off my observation from this strange, and, I then began to think, somewhat mysterious being. The volubility of the women was excessive, while inquiring how I slept—whether any thing disturbed me—

if I heard any noises—saw any thing unusual, and a variety of other questions, all uniting to convince me that some suspicious belief existed in connexion with the room I slept in, and towards which, I must confess, my own notions at the moment had a tendency. I was, however, extremely guarded in my replies, not willing unnecessarily to disturb the fancies of these good people, or to give the sanction of my concurrence to the bad name which they honestly acknowledged their house had acquired. They were very anxious that I should sign a certificate, legalized before a justice of the peace and public notary, that I had not been disturbed by supernatural sounds or sights, and that I went to their house, a mere stranger, unprejudiced by and unacquainted with the reports of its being haunted. This certificate I did actually give; but while it was in preparation I despatched my breakfast, and quitted the mysterious mansion to take a turn upon the beach and in the town, secretly resolving to make some inquiry relative to the inn and its inhabitants.

When I found myself fairly out upon the quay, under the influence of a fine sharp morning, I witnessed an admirable illustration of the difference between darkness and day-light. The town, which the night before, had appeared dismal and desolate, now wore the brisk appearance of vivacity and pleasure. It was Sunday morning. Well dressed groups were in motion in the streets; and varied sounds of animation were afloat. At one corner a baker stood at his shop-door, with apron, open shirt, and naked legs and arms, blowing a long tin horn, which loudly summoned the customers of his oven. The church bell was tolling for prayers. The drums and trumpets of the garrison were sounding for parade; and a noisy party of mountebanks were fitting up a temporary stage in the chief square, and by various dissonant announcements proclaiming the coming entertainments.

I was quite surprised to find the town so well built, so cheerful and so cleanly. Many excellent houses with porticos and arcades, gave promise of wealth and comfort within ; and showed by the style of building, that when they were erected, the rich merchants had profited largely by the discovery of Guinea, the merit and gain of which belonged to La Rochelle.

Having by experience acquired the tact so necessary for him who would gain information, I soon led my inquiries to bear upon the quarter which gave me accommodation the preceding night. I did not scruple to put in requisition the communicativeness of more than one straggling and garrulous citizen, in whose listless and idle air, I read want of mind and wealth of words.

By the time I got back to the inn, I was much better acquainted with its inhabitants than they were aware of ; and by a well managed display of my knowledge, I succeeded in getting them to add to it to the full extent of my wishes. So that by a couple of days spent in braving the discomforts of the green-chamber, where I met with no further molestation, and conciliating the good will of my *entertainers*, I gathered sufficient of the raw material of narrative to enable me to manufacture the following story.

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### CHAPTER III.

It was just fifteen years previous to my visit to La Rochelle, that a catastrophe of a very fatal kind finished a career of great prosperity, long enjoyed

by the inn in question, blasted its reputation for fair play, and procured it the suspicion of dark doings and supernatural visitations.

For full twenty years before that gloomy event this house had been in possession of a man named Louis Potdevin, who with his wife, for they had no children, were generally considered to have amassed a very large sum of money, for persons of their calling. But their gains were made without reproach, and seemed the natural consequences of sobriety, industry and honest dealing. From the moment of Potdevin's entering upon matrimony and business, which were simultaneous speculations, not a proof could be made evident that he had ever swerved from the direct line of honesty. Yet somehow he was always looked on with a suspicious eye. He was a great speculator, and deep intriguer. He was successful in his trade, and discreet in his politics—and though always dabbling in whatever scheme was afloat in the town, of commerce or politics, he always contrived to come clear through, without loss on the one hand, or conviction on the other. He had run safe and sound the gauntlet of the revolution—unharméd in purse or person; had been always one of the most forward of the citizens in every public concern, was always discontented and grumbling with every changing form of government; yet, neither the envy of his townsmen, nor the lynx-eyed scrutiny of the police, could fix a flaw upon his transactions, or find a pretext for impeachment.

In the very first years of the present century, soon after Napoleon made himself Emperor, all the turbulent spirits of France thought the occasion a good one to put their discontent into action. Plots and conspiracies were formed, and insurrections planned in weak abundance, and agents and emissaries were at work in various parts of the country. Amongst

the deadly and diabolical designs against the person of Napoleon, "The infernal machine" was the most infamous in plan, and the nearest to being effective in execution. Just at this period, Potdevin was observed to be particularly busy. Not in attending to his bar or cellar—for these just then were chiefly left to the care of his buxom and industrious wife, and a very comely and clever girl, called Marguerite, who was at that time about twenty-five years old, half of which had been passed in her present and only service. She had acquired a great hold on the regard of both her master and mistress, so much so, that they seemed to consider her quite as their own child, and it was generally believed, from some hints thrown out by the cautions Potdevin, and more loudly echoed by his wife, that Marguerite was destined for the final possession of the fortune, in the earning of which she was so effectually aiding.

Just previous to this eventful period, Potdevin's affairs had seemed to acquire the perfect consistency of success and wealth. He had completed the purchase of his house and premises in the town, and of the amphibious and more hazardous species of property contained in sundry fishing boats and smuggling vessels. Every thing in the house took a new appearance. All was put in repair; painting papering, and all the etceteras of ornament were expensively resorted to, many pieces of solid furniture, picked up at sales, were added to the existing stock; and plate and linen were profusely laid in. The cellar, too, was well supplied with wines and brandies, of good growth and prime vintages, and Potdevin's house seemed fairly established as one of the most steady and best in the town. The master piqued himself upon his odd ways. He never made much fuss about the good cheer and superior accommodations of his house, and his humour may be understood by one eccentric whim. He would permit no sign to hang in front of his house, as is general



to places which thrive as much by attracting as by paying attention; but in lieu of this common appendage, swung a board, on which was painted,

MOI JE DIS QU'AU BON VIN  
IL NE FAUT PAS D'ENSEIGNE.

L. P.

'That is to say,

GOOD WINE  
NEEDS NO SIGN,

or no *bush*, as our unpoetical proverb has it. Just over the kitchen fire-place, another quaint device was painted,

ON MANGE ICI AUJOURD'HUI POUR DE L'ARGENT, DE-  
MAIN POUR RIEN,

or, as we say, "Pay to-day, trust to-morrow," a more pithy way of expressing the ambiguous sentiment, which only wanted a date affixed to make it binding.

But all the practical pleasantries of Louis Potdevin were coming to an end. He suddenly, as I before stated, gave up "all customs of exercise," and seemed over head and ears immersed in the troubled waters of politics. But he never communicated any of his secret employments even to his wife or Marguerite. He often went out of the house, returned again privately, and was, for hours together, shut up in the green chamber (which he had totally appropriated to himself,) when the customers were all gone away, and his wife and her assistant either in bed, or laudably listening at the key-hole of his door, in vain hopes of embodying into some solid information, the faint whispering which they continually heard between at least two persons.

Matters were going on for some time in this mysterious way, when on the morning of the 23d of

November 1805, Louis Potdevin was found dead in his bed. The consternation of Madame and Marguerite was duly expressed in shrieks and exclamations, when, after vain efforts to obtain admittance by fair means, they forced open the door, drew back the green curtains, and discovered the corpse. In sudden calamities of this kind the course of events is always pretty nearly the same. Great confusion, alarm, and conjecture; surgical examination, official inquiry, the undertaker, the grave-digger, a funeral—and forgetfulness. This process went on with perfect regularity in the case of poor Potdevin. The neighbours came in crowds to the awful scene; horror and indifference, loquacity and silence, shaking of heads, shrugging of shoulders, groans, and sighs, were all profusely displayed, as the spectators varied in degrees of feeling. The authorities and the doctor settled between them, that the deceased was the victim of apoplexy—a mass was said for his soul—his body was laid in the ground—and the wreck of a merchant ship on the coast, and the execution of a criminal in the market-place, were sufficient within a week to turn the tide of public interest into channels quite wide of that which is the subject of our inquiry.

After a few days of violent grief, Madame Potdevin took her station once more at the bar; and Marguerite began to distribute her attention and smiles, more faintly and subdued, but not less interesting to the customers than before her master's death. The many friends of the house made it a point to eat and drink most encouragingly for the interest of the widow; and the spirit-stirring calls for the bar-maid were never more frequent, nor so much so indeed, as in the very first days of mourning.

Our inn was the chief resort of the better class of fishermen, and masters of coasting vessels, smugglers as well as fair traders, besides enjoying the custom of very many of the towns-folk and neighbouring

farmers, and a fair proportion of the less dignified orders of travellers, who rode on horseback, or rumbled along the roads, in one horsed *cabriolets*, *pataches*, *char-à-bancs*, and such dislocating conveyances. It may be well supposed that among such a crowd of visitors many a various view was taken of the exact position of Madame Potdevin's concerns, as well as those of her handmaid Marguerite. It was well known that Madame had, immediately on her husband's death, become possessed of a very considerable sum of money, besides securities and rights in property to a large amount, the entire of which was without reserve her own. She was a hale, healthy woman of about forty-five, an excellent age in the eye of an insurance office, or of any man likely to fall in love with the probable continuance of a good jointure, and by no means an objection to him who would submit to the incumbrance of a staid and steady woman, at the corpulent season, in consideration of the weighty items which her property may throw in to balance the account.

Marguerite, on the other hand, was twenty years younger, only *inclined to embonpoint*, active, cheerful, good-looking, and almost sure to be the possessor of all the widow Potdevin's wealth, should the latter remain single, and of a great part of it even should she marry and not have children; and although she promised a continuance of rude health, it was not at her age likely that she would ever be "as well as can be expected." These considerations and calculations, pro and con, produced of course considerable fluctuation in the funds of feelings and tempers which composed the motley combinations of character that thronged to the bar, and kitchen, and bed-rooms of our inn. Most of the middle-aged bachelors gave a decided preference to the widow, considering that possession is the very kernel, and expectancy but the outer shell of love;—and even amongst the younger men, but one or two seemed

satisfied to become the heir presumptive of her property in right of her maid. Even these, however, were rejected by Maguerite, who peremptorily declined their addresses, and handed them over to swell the list of her mistress's suitors.

It was thought singular that Marguerite should thus reject her two public admirers; and the inference was that she had one private lover. It was, however, very hard to find out the truth of this, for she was a close and cautious girl, who held that even tenor of conduct to all comers which suited her situation so well; and she kept her own counsel with a sagacity that offered an excellent example to all her neighbours.

The most conspicuous among the avowed admirers of Madame Potdevin, were Monsieur Ambroise Belpêche, a gardener, Captain Blouffe, a smuggler, and Paul Ricochet, the master of a fishing vessel, the property in which from mast-head to keel, from bowsprit to rudder, had duly devolved to Madame Potdevin as forming part of her late husband's possessions. There were several others whose pretensions quickly faded away before the more substantial claims of the just named candidates. Belpêche was a grey-headed, rosy gilled old fellow, far beyond sixty, a widower without children, well off in the world, having buried his wife and possessing no other kind of incumbrance. He kept a very tasteful and well assorted nursery-ground, with a pleasure-garden attached, at the northern suburb of the town, and there was a spruce and rather priggish air about him, when he came sighing at Madame Potdevin across a huge bunch of ranunculus or stock gilly-flower, that marked him for a man of substance and self-consideration.

Captain Blouffe might have been the gardener's son, for aught I know. He was young enough for it at all events, being not more than forty a swearing swaggering bully, as in duty bound to be; and he had a leering impudence of eye, and a saucy way of

putting his quid of tobacco into his mouth, that seemed to announce his conquest to all the by-standers; when he drank the widow's health in a glass of her own brandy.

Paul Ricochet was a different sort of person from either of these. He had not the sleek and smooth-faced suavity of the one, nor the cut-and-thrust swagger of the other. But he had a way with him more likely to succeed with the fair and gentle sex. He had a happy mixture of boldness with caution—he knew when to keep aloof, and when to go all lengths—when to coax, and when to command—and, above all the best qualifications for a lover, gentle or simple, rich or poor, he had the knack of never betraying by word or look the secret which should be kept safe, from all but the one to whom it should be no secret. He was in other respects a candid off-hand fellow; but on this one point, of deep impenetrable cunning—and he cherished that most laudable hypocrisy which in such cases is worth all the cardinal virtues combined.

The character borne by Paul for profound discretion made him an amazing favourite among his circle of female friends; and it was long evident that our widow, even before she became one, had looked on him with a most affectionate eye. It was therefore considered pretty certain that when the election of a new husband came to be decided, Paul Ricochet would be found to stand at the head of the poll.

The canvass in the mean time went merrily on, on the parts of the gardener and the smuggler.—They lost no opportunity of paying their court, in what they respectively thought the best way. Belpêche gave presents, Blouffe paid compliments—one sighed forth his passion, the other swore to it. The old man touched the widow's avarice, the younger one flattered her vanity—and these are no doubt the two points with all women of her age, between the attractions of which a suitor may long hang suspended, like the coffin of the prophet. Ricochet, mean-

time, stood quietly on his course, and, like a skilful angler as he was, he baited his hooks with just such food as he knew most likely to tickle the old woman's fancy and secure her to his purposes. Yet he was too knowing to commit himself with her. He never made a downright declaration; but contented himself with delicate attentions, and general assurances that she had it in her power to make him the happiest of fishermen, &c. All this produced its due effect. The uncertainty of the widow as to his positive designs kept her anxiety alive and did not deaden her regard; while the gardener's sneaking confessions, and the boisterous avowals of the smuggler, tired her of their attachments before the first could ripen, or the latter be run to his harbour, as it might by analogy be imagined.

But in the midst of all these courtships and counter courtships, the widow, so far from thriving on them, was observed by every body to be in a state of continual depression, to wear a feverish look of anxiety, and to show a nervous shrinking from every mention of the circumstances of her husband's death or even of his name. This for some days excited but little marvel, as she was known to be a shrewd woman, who understood what the world expected from her, under the circumstances. But when, at the end of a fortnight, so far from the appearance of her suffering wearing off, it was evident that all its symptoms were increased, and that Marguerite as well as her mistress wasted away, looked pale, haggard, and woe-begone, the neighbours began to cogitate on the possible causes of all this; and the customers of the inn assembled there almost as much for gossip at the landlady's expense as for refreshment to her profit.

It certainly seemed very unreasonable for any woman in her circumstances to grow pale and thin, to pass sleepless nights, as she avowed, and lose her appetite as she could not conceal. All the married men agreed that not one of *their* wives would show

such obstinate symptoms for a whole fortnight of widowhood; and a few of the bachelors, who had been repulsed by Madame Potdevin and Marguerite, put their heads together to account, if possible, for such an extraordinary combination of events.

One Sunday evening, which was in the early part of the third week after the publican's death, a knot of the aforesaid discarded suitors had assembled round a table in a distant corner of the kitchen; and while apparently discussing the merits of a bottle of *vin ordinaire*, and watching the progress of a game of dominos which two of the party were playing, they gave all their observation to the bar, within which was seated the widow of the woeful countenance, while Marguerite was, with a fatigued and indifferent air, serving the various customers around. The smuggler leaned with his back against the bar counter, his arms crossed, and a cigar in his mouth, puffing a cloud of smoke, which intermixed with sighs, was intended no doubt as symbolical of incense for the widow's shrine. Belpêche was sitting on a chair inside, his cocked hat perched upon his neatly powdered curls, his pig-tail sticking sprucely out behind, the lapel of his green coat decorated with a large bunch of myrtle, his white waistcoat and lace frill all in order, and his black satin breeches, with their shining paste buckles, were contrasted with the broad blue ribbed stockings, meant probably to magnify the proportions of his spindle shanks. Paul Ricochet sat silently on a bench near the fire, but quite within the pale of the widow's jurisdiction, in his blue jacket and frowzers, his red woollen cap, and huge boots gaping in large wrinkles far up his thighs.

"Well, it's an odd thing to me," said a master tailor, one of the junta of observers before-mentioned, "how that woman can listen to the addresses of that old cabbage planter, and that goose of a smuggler, only a fortnight after her poor husband has been buried."

"Because she rejected *your* addresses a week ago, isn't it?" retorted a surly old grocer who sat in the corner. "Poor woman," continued he, "she does *not* listen to their addresses—she's plainly thinking of other matters."

"Aye, that's clear," murmured a tinman, who lived next door to the inn, and who had vainly endeavoured to hammer himself into the widow's favour, singing amorous ditties as an accompaniment the whole day long, ever since her husband's death. "That's clear enough, and a troubled conscience she must have, to pine away as she does in spite of every thing done to please her."

"Yes, yes, cried a chorus of the whole party, "there must be something on her conscience."

"Her conscience!" said the grocer, who seemed resolved to be the champion of the widow, "what do you mean?"

"Why, I mean much more than I choose to say," replied the tinman; "but this I will say, that Potdevin's death was a sudden and a strange one; and I might say more if I chose it."

This was, however, *enough*. Ill nature and scandal are not exigent of arguments. They are always ready to take a hint, and require nothing half so strong as "holy writ" to form a foundation for the structures they raise. In three days from the evening in question, reports and murmurs went abroad; and in two or three more, opinions were freely given that poor Potdevin had come to his death unfairly, and that his wife and her maid had perpetrated the murder: whether with or without associates, the public mind was not quite made up.

Madame Potdevin and Marguerite, the accused, were, as is usual, the last persons to hear the accusation. They were arraigned, found guilty, and condemned, to the perfect satisfaction of their neighbours, long before the pestilent breath of calumny had warned them that they were its victims. But the public had on this occasion fair grounds for sus-



picion certainly. There was something mysterious in the whole tenor of Potdevin's conduct just before his death. He had secrets beyond doubt, and companions joined in them, be those companions whom they might; and from mysterious combinations, dark results must be expected. His death was sudden; and from the hurried way in which posthumous inquests are slurred over in France, it was not impossible in a case of this kind that "strangulation" should have stood in the place of "apoplexy," in the magistrate's report. And in addition to the widow's and Marguerite's deep suffering, so charitably construed into direct evidence of guilt, the neighbouring tiaman before-mentioned, gave a decided intimation of his belief that the inn was haunted by the ghost of its murdered master. He had come to this conclusion from the fact of his having heard, by a close application of his ear to the adjoining wall, sundry unaccountable night noises, proceeding, of course, from the troubled spirit, independent of the sighs and groans of the repentant woman, who suffered under its visitations.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

EVERY trivial circumstance gives weight to rumour, and several concurrent facts were at this time remarked. Both the women were seen to go much more frequently to church than they had ever been accustomed to; and the widow particularly was observed to give large sums in charity, to attend repeatedly at the confessional; while a succession of masses were subscribed to and regularly performed, nominally for the repose of her husband's soul; but it was shrewdly suspected, more with a view to the pardon of her own.

General inferences only could be drawn from these facts. More particular proofs were called for.

A strict scrutiny on the inn and its inmates was the consequence; and a few nights more brought to light the circumstance of a man, muffled in a cloak, coming secretly to the suspected house a little before midnight, after the customers had all retired. He was cautiously admitted by Marguerite, and a careful observance of the windows by the party without showed them that the green chamber, that in which poor Potdevin breathed his last, was lighted up, a most uncommon circumstance; and a hundred strange conclusions were formed upon this mysterious event. But matters went on just as before, nothing positive taking place to eriminate the suspected women but their *looks*, that false evidence on which many an unjust judgment is pronounced.

Now, to put my readers out of pain, or at least to place the characters of two innocent women out of jeopardy, I must say at once that they had positively nothing to do with the assumed murder, directly or indirectly. But it is very certain that they did suffer dreadfully; almost ever since they discovered the blackened face of the corpse staring behind the green bed curtains, by all those appalling noises, which waken echo at midnight, harrowing the consciences of the criminal, and thrilling through the hearts of even the guiltless.

The very night of the day on which the publican was laid in his grave, when the solitude of death itself seemed on the house, the widow, lying sadly in her bed (while Marguerite slumbered disturbedly in the same room,) distinctly heard low sighs and groans, proceeding from the green chamber, which was at the opposite side of the corridor, on which her bedroom opened. Not being of any remarkable weakness of mind, but perhaps the contrary, she endeavoured to persuade herself that it was but her fancy that was at work. She had her share of superstition, however, and she piously repeated her prayers to the Virgin, and her own especial saint, without disturbing her tired and sleepy attendant. That night

passed over; but the next brought a repetition of the awful sounds. Terrified now in downright earnest, and anxious to have her apprehensions confirmed or put to rest, she called in a half whisper to Marguerite, who occupied a bed beside her's.

"Marguerite, Marguerite! are you awake?"

"I am afraid I am, Madame."

"Do you hear any thing?"

"I hope not."

"But what do you think?"

"Oh, Madame, I am too frightened to think!"

"Christ preserve us!"

"And the Virgin!"

"And Saint Fredegonde!"

"Amen!"

And a loud and voluble repetition of the due number of *Paters* and *Aves* succeeded in silencing the indistinct causes of alarm. A third night's repetition of these awful warnings was alone wanting to confirm the belief of Madame Potdevin that her husband's spirit was not yet at rest. The third night came, and with it the so much dreaded sounds. And from that night, might be fairly traced the perceptible misery of appearance, the extravagant donations, the supererogatory masses, and all the other symptoms which drew down the observation of the world.

Madame Potdevin being, as was before stated, a knowing, clever sort of woman, began to open an account of regular calculation between her fears and her profits; and Marguerite, from a perfect sympathy of interest, entered fully into her mistress's views. They were both actually dying by inches of affright and suffering; yet they most enduringly bore up against it all, sooner than, by making known the fact of the house being haunted, utterly ruin its reputation, and cause it to be wholly deserted, the certain consequence as they justly foresaw. It has been seen that the tavern and coffee-house department of the establishment, found no abatement of

custom. The eating and drinking went on as merrily, or more so than ever. But no traveller had as yet occupied a bed, since the recent awful catastrophe. Although the mistress and maid, whom we may almost consider as joint hostesses, suffered terrors indescribable in the endurance of their nightly torment, they rather discouraged for awhile any persons from sleeping at the inn, lest the fatal secret might be prematurely betrayed, for they trusted to the means they employed for getting rid of the evil completely. But when night after night, and week after week, in spite of prayers, and masses, and confessions, the same frightful noises disturbed them, they resolved to make one confident to the sad secret, and they honestly told the Curé of their parish the cause of their distress. Having thus unbosomed themselves, they had half got rid of their fears, and they were almost disposed to join in opinion with the incredulous priest, when he laughed at their recital, and told them they were a pair of fools. He, however, agreed to their request that he should watch one night in the haunted room, and use all the means which religion could afford to quiet the perturbed spirit. He accordingly came secretly (as he thought) to the inn, but we have seen that he was watched; and his proceedings having gone regularly on without harm or hindrance, he left the house as he came to it, confirmed in the belief that the women were the dupes of some delusion or some trick.

Madame Potdevin and Marguerite strove to persuade themselves that they thought with him, but the next night brought back the sounds of alarm, and the renewal of their terrors. They were then convinced that there was no *delusion*—but they did begin to imagine that there might be some *trick*. Somewhat quieted by this notion, they set themselves to a regular task of observation, and they soon noticed a continued train of circumstances, which led to the belief that they had been dupes of a very impure mortality, instead of those ghostly visitations they had imagined. They now remarked that every

morning some article of food, left unlocked up on the preceding night, disappeared with wondrous regularity. Bread, cheese, and other viands, whether fish or flesh, were sure to be carried in small quantities away. Cats and rats were in their turn suspected of these paltry depredations; but a little reflection caused their acquittal of the charge, for it was impossible that they could produce the terrifying sounds which were the accompaniments to such performances. Then again, it appeared unlikely that such ignoble pilfering could be the sole object of those successive attempts. The property of the house was untouched. Spoons, and forks, and every other portable object of value, were carefully counted and found safe. Could all this be then the persevering malice of some enemy, or the wantonness of some thoughtless friend, merely put in practice to frighten its victims? But by whom *could* it be practised? Who could thus attain free entrance to the house, the doors of which were so regularly locked? The women inquired of each other and of themselves—and the debate ended in their being unwillingly forced to suspect François, the lame and purblind hostler, of being the author of these pranks, for some object, the truth of which lay in some well too deep for *their* fathoming.

It was, therefore, decided that he should be carefully examined, and keenly questioned; but on the very morning fixed for this inquisition, François made his appearance before his mistress and Marguerite, and very bluntly told them that, sorry as he was for it, he was forced to quit the service in which he was beginning to grow grey. Startled at this announcement, and wondering how he could have divined their suspicions, and even more than anticipated their intentions, the women eyed him keenly—but discovered nothing at all like guilt. Madame asked him, with feigned indifference, what could have caused so sudden and unprovoked a resolution on his part.

"Because," replied he, "I am worn and wasted

to death—and you yourselves the same ;—because my poor master was murdered, and the house is haunted by his ghost !”

The abrupt and savage tone of this reply made the women start and shudder. François seemed to remark those symptoms with a suspicious air ; and he cut short all further interlocution by a brief statement that from the time of his master's death he had been incessantly tormented by night noises in the outhouse where he slept, or attempted to sleep ; that the few horses which had been under his care showed evident proofs of the fear and uneasiness which all dumb animals display at the times when spirits are abroad ; and, finally, he demanded in a decisive tone the arrears of his wages, and a certificate of his faithful services. Madame Potdevin terrified by the dread of the effect which this sudden measure might produce on the public mind, to the certain detriment of her business, and the probable injury of her character, used the most cogent arguments which her knowledge of human nature, and that of François, suggested, to change the hostler's resolution. But all was unavailing, although seconded bravely by the eloquent energy of Marguerite. François insisted on his point being conceded, and he carried it of course. The last request of his late mistress, on his quitting the house, was that he would keep profoundly secret the circumstances which caused his removal—and François did not fail to treasure up the recollection of this anxiety for concealment, which he could attribute to but one cause. The fact was, that this poor fellow had been himself, several years before, severely smitten by the striking charms of Mademoiselle Marguerite, but his passion being quite ridiculous in her eyes, it had met with no return but contempt. This produced that natural retort of feeling, dislike on his part ; and he came readily into the opinion of the neighbouring tinman as to the mysterious noises which were so frequently heard by both. The separation of François from the old firm of which he had so long been an humble partner,

condensed the vapoury mass of conjecture which had been so long afloat, and it took the shape of a lowering cloud of obloquy on the objects over whom it hovered.

In the meantime, poor Madame Potdevin and Marguerite, so far from being in any way relieved from their apprehensions, had them redoubled by the conviction that the hostler was innocent; and looking at their persecution either as human or supernatural, they had but a duplicate of perplexity and alarm. They, however, resolved to make strenuous efforts to baffle their tormentor should mortal appetite be really a matter of importance to him. They consequently put every remnant of victuals under lock and key; and the night of François' departure, they carefully bolted and barred every entrance to the house, except the private door leading to the green-chamber from the back stairs—but that they durst not approach through the awful premises. That was, however, pretty clearly the vulnerable point for either ghost or robber, and that very night the noises were renewed. Groans, lamentations, and even, as the affrighted women thought, murmured maledictions came in hollow tones through the panels and wainscote; and to complete the horror of the haunted hostess, she found on the kitchen table, when she descended the next morning, a paper, on which was traced in characters of *blood* the following words:

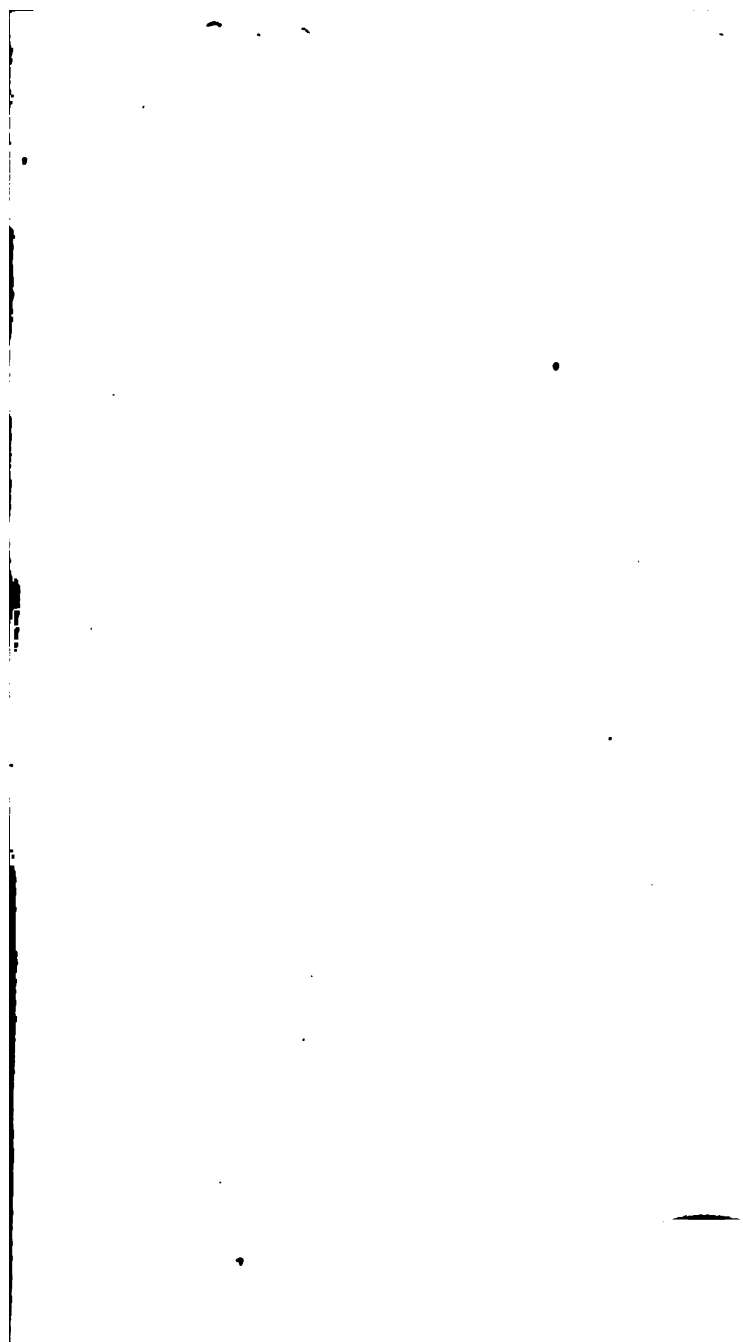
“RASH WOMAN!

“Durst thou control the lawful master of this house and thee? Venture no more to thwart my desires, or dread the vengeance of

THY HUSBAND'S GHOST.”

This dreadful warning was the climax of the widow's tortures. The cup of her sufferings was above the brim; she could bear no more; but determined, with the full concurrence of Marguerite, to make known the state of facts to a few intimate friends, and take decisive measures for the discovery of the horrid case, be it what it might.

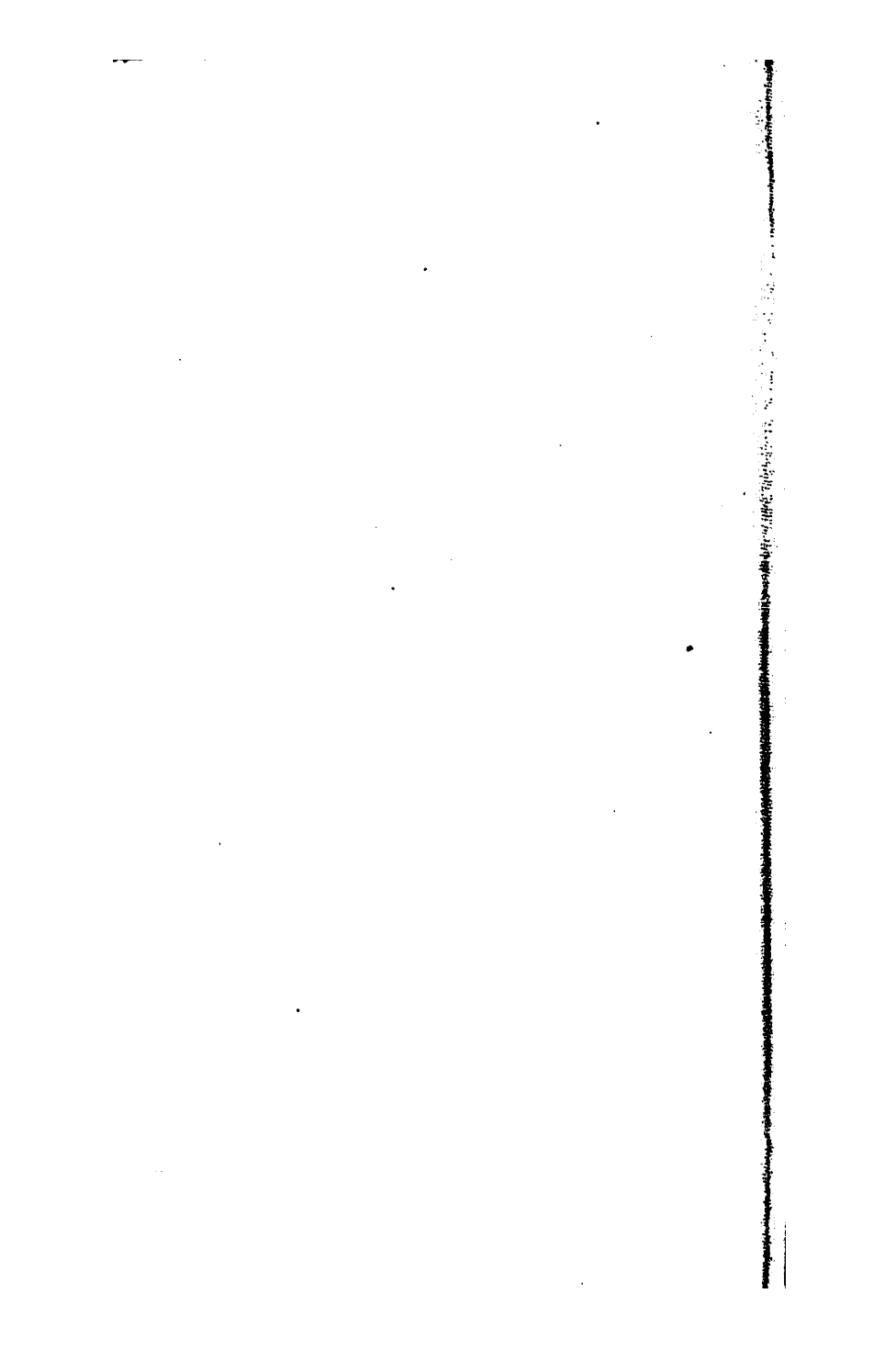
JW











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